

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

TEOREMA



EDITORIAL SUDAMERICANA

Theorem

Dust jacket

None

Tags: General Interest

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*"But God made the people surround
along the desert road."
Exodus, 13, 18.*

FIRST PART

1

DATA

The first details of this story consist, very modestly, of the description of a family life. This is a petty-bourgeois family: petty-bourgeois in the ideological sense, not in the economic sense. This is, in fact, the case of very rich people who live in Milan. We believe that it will not be difficult for the reader to imagine how these people live, how they behave in their relationships with their environment (which is precisely that of the rich industrial bourgeoisie), how they act in their family circle, etc. On the other hand, we believe that it will not be difficult to imagine each of these people (and for this reason we will allow ourselves to avoid some of the usual details that add nothing new): they are not, in any way, exceptional people, but more ordinary people. less current.

The midday bells ring. They are the bells of neighboring Lainate, or Arese, even closer. The discreet and almost sweet howls of the sirens mix with the sound of the bells.

A factory occupies the entire horizon (very uncertain, due to the slight fog that not even the midday light can dissipate) with its walls of a tender green like the blue of the sky. It is an imprecise season (it could be spring, or the beginning of autumn, or both at the same time, because this story does not have chronological succession), and the poplars that frame in long regular rows the immense expanse where just a few months or years ago the factory has emerged are bare, or with faint buds, or have dry leaves.

At the announcement of noon, the workers begin to leave the factory, and the rows of parked cars, which number hundreds and hundreds, begin to come alive...

In this environment, against that background, the first character of our story is presented.

Through the main door of the factory - amidst the almost military greetings of the guards - a Mercedes slowly leaves. Inside, a man with a sweet, abstracted face, a little exhausted: the face of someone who, throughout his life, has only been concerned with business and, perhaps for

health reasons, with sports. He is the owner, or at least the main shareholder of that factory. His age ranges between forty and fifty years old: but he is very youthful (he has tanned skin, barely gray hair, his body is still agile and muscular, characteristic of someone who has played sports during his youth and continues to do so). His gaze is lost in the void, between absorbed, tired or simply inexpressive: therefore, indecipherable. Entering and leaving the factory that belongs to him with that solemnity is just a habit for him. In short, he has the air of a man deeply immersed in his life: the fact of being an important man on whom the destinies of so many other men depend makes him, as is often the case, inaccessible, strange, mysterious. But it is a mystery poor in volume and contrasts, so to speak.

His car leaves behind the factory, "long as the horizon, almost suspended in the sky, and takes the road - newly built between the old poplars - that leads to Milan.

2

OTHER DATA (I)

The midday bells ring.

Pedro, the second character in our story - son of the first - leaves the Parini high school portal. (Or perhaps he has already left and is returning to his house through the everyday streets.)

He too, like his father, has in his not very broad (indeed, almost petty) forehead the light of intelligence of someone who has not lived his adolescence in vain in a very rich Milanese family. But in him the fact that he has suffered from it is much more visible than in his father: so that instead of now being a confident and perhaps sporty boy, like his father, he is a weak boy, with a narrow violet forehead. , eyes already debased by hypocrisy, hair still rebellious but almost defeated by a bourgeois future destined not to fight.

In general, Pedro remembers some cinematographic character from old silent films, and we could even say that he remembers - mysteriously, irresistibly - Carlitos: for no reason, to tell the truth. But when you see him, you immediately think that the boy is made, like Carlitos, to wear coats and jackets that are too big for him, with the sleeves hanging half a meter from his hands, or to run after a tram that he will never reach, or to slip with dignity on a banana peel in a gray and tragically lonely neighborhood.

But these are nothing more than lively and extemporaneous considerations; the reader must not allow himself to be distracted. For now, Pedro can perfectly imagine himself as any young Milanese, Parini student, recognized by his comrades, in everything and for everything, as a brother, an accomplice, a co-religionist in their innocent class struggle, barely begun and already so sure.

Pedro walks, then, with a malicious and happy air, next to a little blonde who obviously belongs to his same level and to his same social tradition and who, without a doubt, is currently his girl. There should be no doubt about this: Pedro returns home crossing the beautiful meadows of a Milanese public garden, bathed by a hot sun (another impalpable possession of someone who owns the entire city) and sincerely busy courting that school friend. . It is true that he does it as if he were fulfilling a painful plan: but this is only due to his secret and unspeakable enthusiasm for being shy, disguised behind a humor and an air of security from which, moreover, he could not escape even if he he would like. His comrades, all dressed correctly, although with a certain fickleness of pretending to be vagabonds and with faces that, touching or unfriendly, are already marked by the precocious lack of all disinterest and all purity, leave the couple behind, complicit. And so Pedro and his girl linger next to a blonde bush, like spikes - if it's autumn - or tenderly transparent - if it's spring -, joking; then they go to sit on a secluded bench; they hug, they kiss; The appearance of some odious witness (a paralytic, for example, who surrenders to the sun, which is hardly a consolation for him) interrupts them precisely in their most guilty gestures (the girl's hand is next to Pedro's sex, although in that sex there is no the least violence): but both are within their rights and their relationship is, after all, sincere, friendly and free.

3

OTHER DATA (II)

The midday bells ring.

Also Odetta, Pedro's younger sister, returns home from school (the Marcelinas school). This poor Odetta is very sweet and disturbing; Her forehead seems like a small chest full of painful intelligence and, even more, of wisdom.

Like the children of the poor, who suddenly become adults and already know everything about life, sometimes the children of the rich are precocious - old, with the old age of their class; They live as if in a kind of illness, but with humor analogous to the sweet joy of poor children: a kind of unwritten code, but which everyone knows, instinctively, by heart.

Odetta seems determined to hide all this: an effort that has not yet been crowned with success, since this visible effort is, precisely, the revelation of her true soul. If the face is oval and beautiful (with some conventionally poetic freckles), and the eyes are large, with long eyebrows, and the nose is short and precise, the mouth is, on the other hand, an almost disturbing indication of what Odetta really is: not because this mouth is ugly (on the contrary, it is very funny); but there is something monstrous about it and that is the defect: it is so pronounced and peculiar that one cannot be distracted from it even for a moment, with that sunken lower lip, like in the snout of bunnies or mice: it is, in short, the mocking grimace of humor - that is, of the painful and masked awareness of one's own nullity - without which Odetta could not live.

Thus, at this moment, as she returns walking at the same time as her brother Pedro, Odetta has all the external and common traits of a very rich girl, authorized by her family (a bit out of snobbery) to dress and behave in a modern way, for so to speak (and despite the Marcelinas).

Odetta also has a boy who courts her: a soft and tall idol of her social class and race. Also around them is the group of comrades, barely adolescents who already behave quite naturally "in the manner of", without any hindrance: exact reproductions of their parents.

The conversation between Odetta and her suitor revolves around a photograph album that Odetta jealously clutches, along with school textbooks. A book with velvet covers, full of pink and red art nouveau arabesques. The album is still empty: evidently she has just bought it in a bookstore. Only the first page has been inaugurated with a large photograph: the photograph of her father.

The suitor jokes a little about that album, as if knowing that it is an old hobby of the girl; but when she shows herself a little bolder - just with a gesture, with a word - next to a dark stone fountain, under the small trees that look like metal, Odetta flees.

His fugue is elegant and childish, absolutely expressionless; but in reality it hides a true terror. And also in her phrase, spoken among friends, to the enraged suitor who follows her: "I don't like men", arrogance and elegant humor resonate: however, it is evident that, in some way, she hides a truth.

4

OTHER DATA (III)

As the reader will have already noticed, ours is, more than a story, what in the sciences is called a "report." It essentially consists of a series of data. Therefore, its aspect is that of the "code", rather than the "message". On the other hand, it is not realistic: on the contrary, it is emblematic, enigmatic... so that all preliminary information about the identity of the characters has a purely indicative value: it serves the concreteness, not the substance of things.

The reader can imagine Lucía, Pedro and Odetta's mother, in a serene and secret corner of the house - bedroom, or boudoir, or intimate living room, or gallery - with shy reflections of the green of the garden, etc. But Lucía is not there as the guardian angel of the house, no; she stands there like a jaded woman. She has found a book, she has started reading it and now she is absorbed in reading (it is a clever and strange book, about the lives of animals). So wait for lunch time. As she reads, a wave of her hair falls into one eye (a beautiful wave, perhaps created by the hairdresser that morning). Leaning back, she exposes her high cheekbones to the radiant light, as if vaguely wasted and mortuary, with a certain sickly ardor; Her eyes, stubbornly lowered, seem long, black, vaguely cyanotic and barbaric, perhaps as a result of her deep limpidity.

But when he moves, raising his eyes for a moment from the book, to look at the time on a small wristwatch (to do so he must raise his arm and expose it better to the light), for a moment he produces the fleeting (and perhaps false) impression, deep down, of being a girl from the town.

Despite everything, her destiny as a sedentary woman, her cult of beauty (which in her is, rather, a function assumed as in an assignment of powers), her obligations towards an enlightened intelligence on a background that persists instinctively reactionary, Perhaps they have been hardening her little by little: like her husband, she has become a bit

mysterious. And although in her too that mystery is poor in volume and contrasts, it is nevertheless much more sacred and immobile (although behind it perhaps a fragile Lucía, the girl of less economically happy times, stirs).

Let us add that when Emilia, the maid, appears to announce that lunch is served (after which she suddenly disappears, frowning, behind the door frame), Lucía, after getting up lazily and throwing the book just as lazily away, In the least appropriate place - perhaps simply dropping it on the ground - the sign of the cross is made quickly, and as if abstracted.

5

OTHER DATA (IV)

The reader must also consider this scene and the one that follows in the story as purely indicative. That is why the description is not detailed nor is it programmed in its details, as occurs in any traditional or simply normal story. We repeat: this is not a realistic story, it is a parable. For the rest, we have not yet entered into the core of the events, we are still in the enunciation.

The family, taking advantage of that beautiful sun, has lunch outdoors; the children have just returned from school; the father, from the factory. Now they are all gathered around the table. The residential neighborhood allows them the peace of the countryside. The garden surrounds the entire house. They have placed the table in a place in the sun, away from the bushes and groups of trees, whose shade is still a little cool.

Beyond the garden is the street, more of a passage - suburban, but a residential suburb - that can barely be glimpsed, with the roofs of other elegant and rigidly silent houses and mansions.

The family has lunch, served by Emilia. Emilia is an ageless girl, who could be either eight years old or thirty-eight; a very poor northern Italian; an exclusive white race. (It is very likely that she comes from some region of Lower Lombardy, not far from Milan, but totally peasant: perhaps from Lodigiano itself, from the area that gave birth to a saint who perhaps resembled her: Saint Maria Cabrini .)

The doorbell rings.

Emilia runs to the door to open it. The one who appears before her eyes is Little Angel, whom we can consider the seventh character in our story or,

rather, a kind of mischievous elf. In fact, everything about him has a magical air: his thick, absurd curls, which fall over his eyes, like a shaggy dog's; his comic face, covered in pimples; crescent-shaped eyes, loaded with an inexhaustible reserve of joy. He is the postman. And there he is, in front of Emilia, a woman of her class who, however, appreciates nothing in him, with a telegram in her hand. But instead of giving him her telegram, he questions her, with an overflowing smile and sweet as sugar, winking and pointing with his head to the garden where her masters have lunch. Then, abandoning Emilia, secluded behind her barrier of silence, he runs to the corner of the villa and from there spies on those who perform the ritual of the rich man's lunch, searching with his eyes for Odetta (whom he courts out of pure unconsciousness). Finally, forgetting about Odetta and everything, with the same speed with which he had remembered, he turns to Emilia as an accomplice. He makes two cheerful faces at the maid (included in her courtship of Odetta), gives her the telegram and leaves, running with comical haste, without eagerness, toward her exit.

Emilia takes the telegram to the family, who continue eating in silence in the sun. The father raises his eyes from the bourgeois newspaper he is reading and opens the telegram, where he says: "I'll arrive tomorrow." The father's thumb covers the name of the sender. It is evident that everyone was waiting for that telegram; therefore, curiosity had already been overcome before confirmation. Thus, everyone continues having lunch, indifferent, outdoors.

6

END OF ENUNCIATION

The interior of our family's house is illuminated, although it is tea time and the long twilight still casts its light, filled with the silence of the poplars and the flat, green meadows, filled with water. As it may be Sunday, there is a small party whose guests are almost all boys. That is, Pedro and Odetta's schoolmates.

But there are also ladies: the mothers of these boys. In the confusion (which in these cases always has an elegiac air, because people lose the miserable, and often hateful, gravity of their personality and are diluted in the sweetness of the atmosphere, that atmosphere of electric light and

sunlight that comes from Lower Lombardy) the new and extraordinary character of our story appears.

Extraordinary, above all for its beauty: a beauty so exceptional that it makes the contrast with everyone present almost scandalous. Observing him carefully, one would say that he is a foreigner, not only because of his tall stature and the blue of his eyes, but also because there is nothing mediocre, recognizable, or vulgar about him, to the point that it is impossible to consider him as a boy belonging to a Italian petit-bourgeois family. On the other hand, he couldn't be said to have the innocent sensuality and grace of a village boy... In short, he is socially mysterious, although he seems to feel very at ease with everyone else in that magically sunlit room.

His presence there, at this very normal party, is like a scandal: but a scandal that is still pleasant and loaded with benevolent expectation. Its diversity lies, ultimately, only in its beauty. And everyone, ladies and boys, observes it, of course without showing it too much, very aware of the main rule of the game in that environment: never reveal yourself, for any reason.

Within the limits of the most casual discretion, one of Odetta's friends or one of her mother's young friends asks who this handsome new boy is. But Odetta shrugs her shoulders. And Lucía does nothing more than give some information with equal casualness, or she limits herself to a pure and simple smile. In short: we will know nothing about him. For the rest, it is not necessary to know. We will therefore leave this last fact of our enunciation unfinished.

7

THE SACRED SEX OF THE GUEST OF MASTERS

It is a late spring afternoon (or, given the ambiguous nature of the story, early autumn), a silent afternoon. You can barely hear the very distant noises of the city.

An oblique sun illuminates the garden. The house is isolated in silence; Without a doubt, they have all come out. Only the young guest remains in the garden. He is sitting on a lounge chair or in a wicker chair. He reads, with his head in the shadow and his body in the sun.

As we will see shortly - when, following the gazes that observe him, we approach him and perceive the details of his body in the sun - he reads notes on medicine or engineering.

The silence of the garden in the profound peace of that impassive or consoling sun, among the first geraniums that emerge (or with the first leaves of the pomegranate trees that fall) is interrupted by an irritating, monotonous, excessive noise: it is the small cutter of mechanical grass that mows, moving here and there through the park, restarting each time without variations, without interruption, its uncertain stridor.

The one who pushes the lawnmower back and forth is Emilia.

He is in a corner of the garden, at the bottom of a smooth, flat park, of almost dazzling greenery, while the young man is in another corner, near the house, under an ivy pergola.

From time to time the excessive noise of the mower is interrupted: Emilia stops for a moment, tense. She stares at the young man, with a very strange look, like someone she does not have the courage to look at and at the same time she is unconscious enough not to be ashamed of her own insistence. On the contrary, her gaze gradually clouds, as if it were Emilia herself who might feel bothered by this indiscreet insistence of hers.

How long does Emilia continue walking with the lawnmower, stopping, looking, and then moving on again, hunched over and sweaty? And for how long, unaware not only of her, but also of the fact that he ignores her, does the young man continue reading her notes? For a long time, perhaps all morning, that is, during the brief morning of the rich houses, where ten o'clock is still dawn. The sun rises higher and higher in the cloudless sky, until it becomes hot in an arid summer peace.

Emilia continues to push the lawnmower vigorously, clumsily (by the way, that should not be her job, but rather the gardener's; but for some time now she has taken charge of the care of the park out of a kind of rivalry with the gardener, since she is the daughter of farmers and comes directly from the countryside).

The young man does not notice, therefore, that they are looking at him, totally and almost innocently immersed in his study - which, in Emilia's eyes, is an almost sacred privilege. Especially since he has now put down his notes - perhaps to rest a little - and is reading a small volume, in

paperback, of Rimbaud's poetry. And this reading absorbs it even more than the previous one.

At first, Emilia's gaze, who stops to contemplate him, is quick, fleeting, and can only encompass the entire figure of the guest, with his head in the shadow and his body in the sun.

But then her gaze sharpens and she focuses for a longer time on that distant and unresponsive object: while she passes her forearm across her forehead to remove the sweat, she explores, frowning, the details of the body that is offered to her there, unconscious and total. .

Little by little, his gestures - which seem obsessive just because of their simple mechanics - become obsessive in an explicit and almost ostentatious way.

So this coming and going in the humble function of cutting the grass loses its naturalness, its nature as an everyday task, and becomes almost the external form of a dark intention.

And in truth, in those incessant glances at the guest something shady, senseless begins to insinuate itself. To the point that at last - as if she could no longer resist (but the guest continues without noticing Emilia, immersed in her reading and, on the other hand, socially, spiritually, so far away from her) -, Emilia, theatrically, leaves the room. mower in the middle of the park and almost runs into the house. She crosses the living room, the kitchen, enters her room, small as a cell, with the luxuries granted by her master and with her poor motley belongings. And there she begins to make gestures that would seem normal, but that turn out to be absurd due to her frenzy and her inappropriate timing. She combs. She lifts her earrings. She prays (a short prayer, somewhere between blessed and ecstatic). Then she shakes herself off from her ecstasy, kisses and kisses again an image with the Sacred Heart, and leaves. She returns, always theatrically, to the garden, to her mower.

And he restarts the obsessive ceremony, pushing the mower here and there across the lawn, always exploring the boy's body with cloudy, innocent eyes. Soon, the contemplation of that body becomes unbearable. And Emilia turns in anger against her own temptation.

He escapes again, but this time in an even more clamorous way: crying, almost howling, like the victim of a hysterical attack.

He tramples the grass in the garden, like a crazy sheep, and goes back into the house, panting.

He crosses the living room once again, rushes into the kitchen, and with a violent but somewhat abstracted and idiotic gesture, he pulls out the gas pipe, as if he wanted to kill himself.

This time the young man, by force of things, had to notice and become interested in her. He cannot but have heard that crying, those frantic sobs; He cannot but have glimpsed the flight of the woman, who clearly intended to be looked at and taken into account. So he almost runs after her and finds her in the kitchen. And there he sees her surrendered to her crazy, exalted gestures. He helps her. He takes the gas tube out of her hands, tries to cheer her up, comfort her, find a way for her to interrupt that blind access of pain that he no longer recognizes at all.

He drags her to his tiny room and lays her on the bed: he lays her down, while Emilia already begins to stir and sigh with less frenetic eagerness and to show the desire to be calmed and consoled.

In all this - in the act of lifting her, of speaking to her, of laying her in that sad bed - the young guest has a strangely protective, almost maternal air; like a mother who already knows the whims of her child and anticipates them in a kind of loving awareness.

**That attitude of his, that expression of
the eyes that seem to say "It's not
nothing serious!" are accentuated even more
when Emilia (flattered by his
tenderness and his caresses, and blindly
obedient to his instinct, no longer
tapujos), almost mechanically, in a
kind of more mystical inspiration than
Hysterical, she lifts her skirt
the knees.**

This seems the only way she has, deprived of conscience and words - and now of modesty - to declare herself, to offer something, like a plea, to the boy. And precisely because it is excessive, all of this has an animal purity and humility.

Then the boy - always with a maternal, protective, sweetly ironic air - lowers her skirt a little, as if to defend the modesty that she has forgotten and that offers herself entirely to her. Then he caresses her face.

Emilia cries out of shame: but it is not that peculiar kind of crying that is the childish release of a crisis that has already been appeased, consoled.

He wipes her tears with his fingers.

She kisses those fingers that caress her with the respect and humility of a dog or a daughter who kisses her father's hands.

Nothing opposes their love: and the boy lies on the woman's body, lending himself to her desire to be possessed by him.

8

DEGRADING MISERY OF THE OWN BODY, NAKED AND REVEALING FORCE OF THE BODY NUDE OF THE COMPANION

Along the white road, in the middle of the town's green park, light and elegant people arrive: a lady of Lucía's age, girls, perhaps her daughters; and piles of suitcases and bags, all made of expensive, dark leather. The gloomy air, on which a sun shines perhaps filtered by distant clouds, surrounds this arrival with a strange, unreal atmosphere. Dissipated, however, by the naive shouts and exaggerated demonstrations of joy that even rich and well-educated people allow themselves on some occasions. Lucía and her children receive these guests loaded with suitcases. Lucía seems almost disembodied, in the severe elegance of her. Everyone passes from the fantastic air outside, from the too green garden, to the well-protected air inside, passing through the small, sparkling glass doors.

As a corollary of this arrival, Emilia enters shortly afterwards - or at dusk - bowed by the weight of a large suitcase (a man's) into Pedro's room. There she leaves the suitcase (with religious delicacy, because it is the guest's suitcase) and devoutly leaves.

The guest and the son sleep, therefore, in the same room. And at night, they enter it together.

Pedro's room is that of a boy who is beginning to mature. It still has the whimsical character of a bourgeois first-born's room (that is, it is arranged with the taste that mothers attribute to their children, through whom they

modernize themselves: and the nest of childhood dreams becomes a mixture of painters fauves, comics and American heroes). But at the same time, the room - transforming with the son's age - is no longer that of a child, but that of a young man superimposed on the previous one, just as two different styles are superimposed on the façade of the same church. The new style is very severe and elegant, without superfluous things, although the two or three pieces of furniture are antique.

There are two beds, of course, a real bronze bed, very elegant, perhaps chosen by the mother, and a divan also very elegant (and even embellished by the need to disguise it).

The two boys, the young man and the young man, go to sleep at the same time, taciturn, perhaps a little tired.

(Is this night before or after the day on which the meeting with Emilia occurred? It could be before or after: it does not have the slightest importance.)

The two then enter the room. Perhaps it is late, perhaps they are sleepy, perhaps their silence is due - this hypothesis is the most probable - to the modesty that, not without a strange and unpleasant feeling on Pedro's part, they both feel when they enter the room together and begin to undress.

While the guest - perhaps more expert and, in short, more adult - moves with a certain ease, the other seems hindered in his movements by something that makes him excessively concentrated, annoying, rigid. The young guest undresses, naturally, in front of the boy: until he is completely naked, without fear, without the slightest feeling of shame, as happens, or should happen, in almost all cases, between two young people of the same sex and almost the same age.

**It is obvious that Pedro, we repeat,
feels deep shame and
unnatural, which could be explained
(since it is the youngest) and could be
in him a trait of greater grace if at
unless it had a little humor and
a little anger But you see it
disturbed by that modesty. His paleness**

**increases, the seriousness of his eyes
pardo becomes mean, almost miserable.
To undress and put on his pajamas, he
lies under the sheet, doing with
such an easy operation is very difficult.**

Before falling asleep, both boys exchange a few simple words: then they say good night and each one remains alone in his bed.

The young guest - full of that serenity that does not hurt those who are deprived of it - falls asleep with the mysterious sleep of healthy people. On the other hand, Pedro cannot fall asleep; He remains with his eyes open, turns under the covers: he does everything that someone who suffers from stupid insomnia does, humiliating like an unjust punishment.

9

RESISTANCE TO REVELATION

Is there any time?

In the heart of the night, Pedro is still awake, still absorbed in that thought that does not let him sleep and that is undoubtedly indecipherable to himself.

Suddenly he gets up. And, little by little, for fear that the guest will wake up, even more so, terrified by that idea, white with anxiety, trembling with the panic of being discovered in that act, he takes a few steps into the room, approaches the guest. and looks at his face, his arms, his exposed chest for a long time. He contemplates that calm, virile and warm dream. He remains like this, lost, alienated in that contemplation.

10

LITTLE ANGEL: COMES AND LEAVES

The young guest, Lucía and Odetta are sitting in the garden, around a table where a white tablecloth with long pink or barely orange flowers flutters.

The very large garden, with its green English-style lawn, the entrance to the house and the street beyond, are on the same plane, a unique environment, at the same height.

In front of the garden stretch in the distance, to the left, the last, nebulous suburbs with factory walls white and diaphanous like herons, and

to the right the street with its villas and its hard, oblique, silent mansions.

Everything is immersed in a silent peace where sounds full of vitality and deep, intimate sweetness float.

In this silent repose of the guest with Lucia and Odetta - who do not speak, or only exchange trivial words that mean other things, obscure or perhaps inexpressible - unexpectedly arrives, performing a sort of slightly absurd and certainly arbitrary solo, the postman of the curls, between innocent and shameless, as if sent by miracle from the distant city. He arrives with the midday mail, consisting of brochures and unsealed envelopes that no one expects or opens.

It emerges along the path, with its vanished conifers, crosses the garden gate, advances appearing and disappearing behind the vegetation, entering through the portal of the villa.

It is already well known in the house that he courts Odetta: it is an innocent courtship, done as if by instinct, by magic; Everyone knows it and has fun with the show: it is a short evening tradition.

Angelito's smiling eyes, in the shape of a crescent, are glimpsed between the sparse leaves (because autumn makes them fall or because they are barely emerging) and communicate pure and simple happiness.

Here he knocks on the door, says some silent joke to Emilia (who disapproves of him in every way and comes out to receive him reluctantly, with lowered eyes) and immediately leaves, singing, forgetting to look at Odetta, as if attracted by him. sun of everyday existence that shines on the distant city.

11

THE CHOICE OF SELF AS INSTRUMENT OF SCANDAL

Perhaps it is still the same night in which we left Pedro contemplating the sleeping guest. (We emphasize it for the last time: the facts of this story are coincidental, contemporaneous.)

Now Pedro is lying in his bed, but still not sleeping. He is kept awake by his feverish thoughts... He is a man who struggles: he tries to explain what disturbs him with such unexpected brutality.

Suddenly he stands up almost abruptly, dragged by the mysterious force that was born within him that night. He gets up or, rather, gets up again.

And he tremblingly approaches the bed where the guest is sleeping.

We have said it: Pedro has all the features of psychology and even bourgeois beauty It's rather pale, and it would be said that his good health is due just the fact that it has a very hygienic life: he does gymnastics and sports. But that paleness has something of hereditary - or rather of impersonal. What is pale in him is something else: humanity, the world, its social class.

His eyes are very intelligent: but his intelligence is as if clouded by an intellectual illness, of which Pedro is not aware, compensated as he is by the security that his birth offers him when understanding and acting.

Therefore, there is an initial obstacle that fatally prevents him from understanding and, above all, from admitting what is happening to him now. In order to really exercise his intelligence with a sense of reality, he would have to be remade from head to toe. It is his social class that lives a true life in him. It is not by understanding or admitting, but only by acting, that he will be able to apprehend the reality that has been stolen from him by his bourgeois reason; only acting, as in dreams, or rather, acting before deciding.

Now he trembles in front of the guest's bed. And as if obeying an impulse stronger than himself (and which nevertheless arises from within him), the same impulse that made him get out of bed, he now does something that, a moment before, he would not have even dreamed of being able to do or, rather, with wanting to do.

Little by little he lifts the light blanket placed over the guest's naked body, sliding it over his limbs. His hand shakes and a moan almost comes out of his throat.

And after that gesture that reveals him to the belly, the guest wakes up. He looks at the leaning boy who is doing something so absurd about him, and suddenly his eyes are filled with that light that we already know from

him... that light of a father filled with maternal confidence... that is at the same time understanding and sweetly ironic.

Pedro raises his eyes from his belly, now exposed to the first pubic hair, and meets that gaze. He does not have time to understand her: shame and terror blind him. Crying and hiding his face, he throws himself on his bed and buries his head in the pillow.

The guest gets up and goes to sit on the edge of Pedro's bed: there he remains motionless for a while, looking at the back of Pedro's neck shaken by sobs. Afterwards - with the camaraderie of a contemporary - he caresses it.

12

JUST AN ADULTERY?

The guest is there, far away, alone, among the aquatic plants, the groups of pruned trees full of buds.

But it's already late spring heat: we begin to remember the deep silences, the ardent and pleasant summer evening hours. The old afternoons of past centuries also come to mind (a bell, barely perceptible, but clear, indicates noon): the branches still dry, or barely veined by the green of the first leaves, on the rust color, on the blood color, on the sad yellow, are barely like a sketch, but one feels that they are nature, not represented, but hinted at behind the stone scenes of the Romanesque baptisteries, massive and powerful figurations of a daily life, lived throughout. along the tributaries of the Po and, precisely, warmed by a sun like this and surrounded by equally fragile and milky groves.

**The young guest is half naked:
runs, playing with a dog, to the
shore of a kind of pond
intensely green: a shoal next to the
Ticino course. It is lively, strong and
happy as a boy while running
back and forth, or dives into the
water, with a branch in hand, thing
that drives his friend crazy with joy
the dog. Lucía looks at the guest who**

**He plays there, in the open. She is sitting
in a kind of elevation and has to
their backs a sunny meadow in whose
background, on elegant pillars,
raise a chalet. There, protected from
every strange look by the vehement
thick vegetation, Lucía
remains for a long time contemplating,
expressionless, to the boy who plays.
Inexpressive as someone does with
difficult intensity mental calculations
that seem about to be resolved,
judge by certain light of the eyes. He
result of these calculations, for the
moment, is that Lucía crosses the
meadow and slowly enters the chalet.**

There, in the darkness, he looks carefully around him. There is a small bedroom, separated by a thick curtain. The rich Milanese family wanted to have there, in that place, an almost empty house; an elegant space where you can camp almost in discomfort. The curtain is drawn back and we can see, in one corner, a narrow bed with thick dark blankets. Against the dark blankets, the boy's clothes stand out in the light that filters through the shutters: summer clothes, almost all of them light.

Lucía watches them for a long time, immersed in her thoughts, fast and complicated, which shine through in her eyes, like a while ago, when she was looking at the boy who was playing in the grove.

Then, little by little, calmly - and with that light in his eyes that seems nothing more than the final and positive result of a calm calculation - he approaches the clothes that are bleaching almost violently, thrown at random on the bed. She bows, kneels before them.

They are the young man's shirt, his shoes, his watch, his briefs, his pants.

Lucia looks at them.

The clothes are there, innocent under his gaze, as if abandoned.

Observing them is very easy, because they do not put up any resistance: on the contrary, they offer themselves almost with too much, defenseless humility.

His slip is rolled up, like a floor cloth; His pants lie lengthened on the rustic blanket, as if they were worn by a man with his legs spread, fast asleep; The shirt is of an unnatural whiteness, too pure. Those fabrics look like the relics of someone who has left forever.

Perhaps this thought - "and when he looked inside, he saw the canvases alone"... - anguishes Lucía's heart; She does not retain the gesture with which she squeezes it or the grimace of pain that constricts her mouth, as in a kind of nostalgia: nostalgia for something that she has lost without ever having possessed.

Or perhaps the insistent contemplation of those insignificant objects is a kind of revelation for her. Thanks to which he suddenly understands who it really is - now that he is not present - the one who uses them, the one who has warmed them with the natural warmth of his body, the one who now seems to have left them there, without intention, so that they give testimony of him.

Little by little Lucía's eyes lose that contemplative indifference and are filled with tenderness. Those, it is true, are the clothes of a young man who could be her son's: the tenderness they arouse in her is, therefore, a kind of maternal fetishism.

He takes them in his hand, looks at them and, perhaps, caresses them: his hand passes with impudent naturalness over the parts of the clothes that he could never touch when the young man wears them. She repeats those gestures many times, without losing her dignity, like a mother who heals the wounds of her son. But those gestures, repeated, little by little drag her out of herself. Now she is like Pedro, possessed of a dream born within herself, misunderstood and rejected. To do it she must also act before deciding she... she Heads back towards the door. She looks again at the boy, who runs there, among the branches that, due to excess light, have lost their color.

In the silence of midday you can clearly hear the barking of Barbin, the dog.

The woman looks at the distant boy and her

**look becomes increasingly cloudy:
It is no longer a calculation that swirls
inside, but something that seems
a prayer Like an automaton, it turns
herself, climbs the ladder
Outside, it reaches the terrace. There
spreads -on the wooden pavement
dark- like it does every day:
but she can't stay lying down,
crushed between the bare pavement and
the impossible sky She gets up,
kneels, leans over the parapet and
look again there, towards him
young, among the vegetation.**

He is still there, unreachable, playing, swimming, running between bushes and trunks.

Then Lucía slowly takes off her dress and remains naked on the terrace, behind the small parapet. Staying naked like this, anticipating sunbathing, may also be a habit for her. And she continues looking at the young man who still does not notice her, absorbed in her career under the blinding light.

Until the moment comes when he gets tired of his games and baths and moves towards the chalet, but very slowly, without stopping playing with the dog. It is evident that his intention is to go in and stay with Lucía for a while, chatting or reading a book together.

With a quick gesture, Lucía takes her dress, as if to put it on. But later, that uncertain light of a barely outlined calculation returns to her eyes, fixed on the red tiles of the terrace: the decision to remain naked and to show herself naked before him had already been made. With the same almost hysterical naivety and the acquiescence of an insensitive animal that had dominated Emilia's resolution, or that of Pedro, a few days before (or after).

Naturally, unlike Emilia, Lucía fights against that determination: modesty and shame - which her social class lives in her - are about to regain control; So she must fight against that modesty and that shame. And once

again, to overcome the obstacles of her education and her world, she must act before she understands.

Suddenly she clenches the dress in her fist and throws it beyond the parapet, towards the pond, towards the grove. And she looks at him there, in the background, among grasses and brambles, irrecoverable: his presence in that place is deeply significant, her loss and his inertia have the expressive violence of objects in dreams.

Now Lucía is naked: she has forced herself to be. She can no longer have regrets or hesitation. She turns around: the boy is already on the field covered with tufts of grass under the chalet. She sees him. She sees him enter and then sees him leave again, look around, call to her.

Like a martyr, barely peeking over the parapet, Lucía shouts to him: "I'm here!" He turns, smiles at her with all the innocence and normality of his youth and agilely climbs the stairs that lead to the terrace. He thus appears against the sky: her eyes look at her immediately.

Lucía holds that gaze for a moment, invoked, longed for: but only for a moment.

The mechanism that she herself has set in motion allows her to be ashamed in front of him. She runs and curls up against the parapet, covering her belly with her knees and her chest with her arms.

The pleasure of having been violated by that look, of having lost and voluntarily degraded, coincides with a shame that may be casual and legitimate: that of having been surprised while sunbathing on the terrace. She plays that role, carefully and seriously like a child: but she plays it badly, consciously. In truth, he has understood that if he demonstrates excessive, true shame, innocently taken by surprise, the guest could look away from her, divinely degrading, and even leave asking for excuses. To the real shame that she feels - and that suffocates her - and to the false one that she represents, she must add, therefore, as best she can, a coquetry that soon acquires the tearful clumsiness and the murky impudence of an invitation: a ridiculously infernal smile in lost eyes, who soon forget all fiction and focus desperately on the young man.

But he... has that look of his, natural, understanding, perhaps veiled by a little irony and at the same time by an enormous, sweet, protective strength of a father. He approaches the woman who presses herself more and more against the parapet, covering herself, lowering her head. He leans over her

and caresses her hair: and under that caress, Lucia dares to raise her eyes to her guest, filled with a deplorably begging look.

13

WHERE THE NEW STARTS INITIATION OF A BOY BOURGEOIS

In Pedro's room, the young guest, next to Pedro, leafs through a large book with bright illustrations in the afternoon light, which falls powerfully on the colored pages. Pedro looks at those reproductions of a painting that he does not know and that, perhaps until now, due to the influence of his art history professor at Parini, he had ignored or disapproved. (In fact, in his eyes you can see the attention of someone who discovers something, after an initial suspicion, almost with gratitude.)

The painting that the two boys are looking at has very clear colors. Pure colors: if you look at it carefully, it is a network of contours that leave free surfaces, triangles, warped rectangles, as if extended on a curved surface: those pure colors, Prussian blue, red, expand on this surface. Pure but very discreet, almost muted, as if veiled by a patina. The cardboard on which those watercolors or those tempera paints have been spread - although with the richness and constructive depth of oil paints - is yellowish: poorly yellowish. It seems to smell old, moldy, like a library. Although absurd, free, open to such an extent, the painting is very severe and its pure colors are not those of the Fauves. What painting is it? The date can undoubtedly be placed between 1910 and 1920. It does not belong to the civilization of cubism, to its sumptuousness. It is brief, extremely brief. Perhaps it belongs to futurism, but not to the dynamic and sensual Italian futurism. Something naive and popular, that is, childish, could make one think of Russian Futurism, of some minor painter, a friend of Eisenstein, Sklovsky or Jakobson, who had worked between Moscow and Saint Petersburg; or perhaps in Prague, as a cubist. No, here is the signature: Lewis, a friend of Pound, an American from the years of Imagism. A graphic painting, with colored surfaces, built like a perfect machine and so rigorous that it has reduced the painting to the bone.

Almost at the same time, Pedro and the young guest take their eyes off the reproduction and look at each other with that mysterious relationship,

born in the night...

But some voices calling from outside interrupt the solitude of both: boys' voices, fresh and youthful, a little vulgar.

Pedro and the guest move away from the warmth of their bodies, sitting next to each other, with the Galeotto book on their knees, and go out into the garden. They look out over the parapet that faces the street and see a group of Pedro's friends and schoolmates.

"Here we are!" they shout; and the two almost run across the garden to meet them at the gate.

14

RE-EDUCATION FOR DISORDER AND THE DISOBEDIENCE

The two young men, Pedro and the guest, play ball on a soccer field, with the other boys, Pedro's school friends (archetypes of Parini's life). The air has the maximum Lombard clarity (and even a ringing of bells from the northern lands). Life seems to have lost the obstacles, obstacles, annoyances, daily evils. In that serenity, it slides like oil. It is the life of young Pedro.

As if surrendered to an unconscious euphoria, he and his friends play without intending to win. Joy is that of play for play's sake: even those who are not in the slightest condition to play, take pleasure in some easy feats in which they consume the morning of their youth.

As sometimes happens, Pedro, from such a rich family, has not had the money necessary to equip himself in the best way for soccer: he has the pants and the shirt that are bought in cheap stores and the soccer shoes (they must be a tradition for him) hurt him because a nail has gone through the sole. To the point that, limping and very reluctantly, he runs to the edge of the court to take off a shoe and examine it. But once there, on that manicured grass, surrounded by the street, the immaculate white walls and, further away, the Greek amphitheater of the suburb, he feels a kind of beatitude. Neither the gaze nor life find any resistance there. He lies face up: very soon, that moment of peace turns into loneliness and alienation.

The guest also moves away from the group that is playing - with those young and old faces - and sits next to Pedro. Thus, with the pleasure of repeating the same things a hundred times, proud of their own rebellion

against all tradition, filled with a clean and deep passion - which one only has once in a lifetime - the two friends begin to talk about literature and paint.

15

"THE FIRST TO WHOM WE LOVE..."

The first ones we love

They are the poets and painters of the previous generation
or from the beginning of the century; in our spirit
take the place of parents, although they remain
young as in their yellowed photographs.

Poets and painters for whom being bourgeois was no shame...
children wrapped in vicuña and felt...

or with poor ties that tasted like rebellion and a mother.

Poets and painters who would have become famous
by mid-century,

with some unknown friend of great value,
but, perhaps out of fear, reluctant to poetry
(true poet, died prematurely).

Sidewalks of Vienna or Viareggio, riverbanks
from Florence or Paris

that resonated under those children's feet,
shod with thick shoes!

The gust of disobedience tastes like cyclamen!
over the cities at the feet of young poets!

The young poets who chat
after a vile beer binge

like bourgeois, independent abandoned but burning locomotives,
forced, for a certain time,

to take advantage of the lack of hurry of youth
on blind trunks:

sure they can change the putrid world
with four passionate words and an unruly step.

Mothers as mothers of birds
in the small bourgeois houses

they intertwine the jasmine of the air
with the meaning of the private light of a family,
and his position in a nation full of parties.
The nights, like this, resonate only with the boys' footsteps.
Melancholy has infinite openings
(infinite like the stars in Milan or in another city)
through which they send their air from a lit stove.
Sidewalks run alongside 17th century houses,
peeling houses with sacrosanct destinies
(streets of a village converted into an industrial city),
with a romantic, distant smell of frozen stables.
This is how young poets acquire the experience of living
and they can say to each other what others say,
the young non-poets (they are also lords of life and innocence)
with mothers who sing
in the small windows of the internal patios
(stinking pits for the unseen stars).
Where have those steps been lost?
A severe page of memoirs is not enough;
No, perhaps the only non-poet poet is not enough,
the painter in the painter,
died before or after a war,
In some city of legendary transfers,
He has those nights in him, truly.
Ah, those steps of the children
of the best families in the city
(those who follow the destiny of the nation
like a horde of animals follows the scent
—aloe, cinnamon, goat's beard, cyclamen- in their migration),
those poets steps
with painter friends, who make the streets resonate
while they talk and talk...
But if this is the scheme, another is the truth.
Reproduce, son, those children.
Be nostalgic for them when you turn sixteen.
But you start to know right away

that no one has made revolutions before you;
that old or dead poets and painters,
despite the heroic air with which the haloes,
They are useless to you, they teach you nothing.
Enjoy your first naive and stubborn experiences,
shy dynamite, master of free nights,
But remember that you are only here to be hated,
to knock down and kill.

16

THE FATHER'S TURN ARRIVES

In his unmade bed, the father suffers horribly. At first, his pain is still unconscious: in fact, he continues sleeping, rambling in that dream from which, between moans, he seems to want to get rid of. Shortly afterward he awakens and slowly becomes aware that his pain is not a nightmare, but a real, physical pain.

Then, painfully, he decides to get out of bed very slowly, so as not to wake Lucía.

He crosses the hallway almost groping and reaches the bathroom. The shutters are open in it, and through an opening in the curtain the dazzling and already firm light of dawn bursts in, as if it were noon. Humble and supreme. But that wonderful sun - which, by accident, floods the white and vile emptiness of the house with the same innocence with which it shines in the sky or among the things of nature - lacks any reality for the father: he barely feels it. unpleasantly dazzled; or else that sun is not for him but something that seems to increase his pain to the point of vertigo.

Thus, covering his eyes with his hand, he tries to cast off that evil, while high above him, who does not even have the strength to hold his head up, the sun continues to shine - through the narrow bathroom window - in the brief, sharp, radiant strip of garden seen through the opening of the curtain.

Only when he feels a little relieved does the father begin to become aware of the miracle of that radiance.

And his hand, which still seems autonomous of his will, rests unsteadily on the windowsill, touches the glass, draws back the part of the curtain still closed on that comforting and amazing thing that is the light of that hour, never seen before.

This is how the entire garden appears, behind the house, the large green park, the groups of laurels and birches: a silent corner of the world discovered by that sweet, deep sun, not seen or enjoyed by anyone.

Then the father (he has done something similar in his life) turns away from the window, leaves the bathroom, returns to the desolate gloom of the house, gropes through it, still suffering, until he opens the large glass door of the house. garden and goes into it. As he walks through the wet grass, searching among the plants, his face is illuminated by the radiant sun - a pink that is pure light -, a slight lost and almost theatrical smile: such is the charm of him. He walks like a stranger in a place never seen before.

In truth, it is the first time that he notices those trees, bathed in a light that is outside the traditions of his experience. They seem animated, like conscious beings: conscious and - at least in that peace, in that silence - fraternal. Passive under the light that bathes them like a natural miracle; the laurel, the olive tree, the small oak and, further away, the birches seem to be content with a glance to repay that attention with an infinite and infinitely pre-existing love: and they say it, literally they say it, with their simple presence, golden and vivified by the light, which expresses itself without words, only with itself. Presence that has no meaning and that at the same time is a revelation.

But there is evidently no proportion between the miracles revealed and all the other things done in life. However, the father - perhaps because they are an extraordinary exception for him - is unable to persist at the height of that situation, to continue fighting with that stupefying love of the sun: the cold makes him shiver painfully under the light fabric of his pajamas, His feet are wet with dew and the pain once again grips his viscera.

Thus - still with his lost and miserly smile on his lips - he enters the house again.

17

EVERYTHING MIRACULOUS, LIKE THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING NEVER SEEN

Abandoning the garden to its light, the father returns gropingly, retracing his path, inside the house, until he enters the corridor sadly illuminated by the electric light. But as if caught by a sudden thought, he stops at the door of his son's bedroom.

Once again, his impulse is something mechanical and inspired: a kind of curiosity that he has never felt and about which he is unable to ask himself anything: very slowly, he opens the door.

In the bedroom, that light, which has not yet exhausted its mission without ties to the things of the world, enters through the cracks of the large blind and outlines the guest and the son, who sleep in the same bed.

Sleep has disordered them: but with a disorder full of peace. The bodies, half uncovered, are intertwined: but sleep separates them, the limbs are warm with a blind and lukewarm vitality, and at the same time they do not seem to have life.

The father remains for a long time looking, moved, at this apparition whose meaning he does not know and which, in some way, is also revealing.

Finally he steps away, closes the door very slowly, like a thief, and returns to his room.

Lucía sleeps with her light sleep. Her father's bed is unpleasantly unmade. He gets into it, but can't go back to sleep. Something that has no name, but an unbearable lucidity, forces him to remain with his eyes open, thinking, perhaps, of a life whose meaning, after having been altered, he remains in suspense. To do?

Finally, seized by a kind of crazy impatience, he shakes Lucía and wakes her up.

Since Lucía is in a position to hear - all sacred fear of the absurd and ridicule having been lost - she asks him to make love: even more, she demands it.

Lucía does not realize what is happening – he is already on top of her, exacerbated, like a blind man who is groping: it does not matter what she may think. But Lucía, terrified, has already become immersed and lost in a question that encompasses her entire future life, something that, at the moment in which it happens, seems irremediable: a new light that illuminates the past without a shadow of rationality and pity. .

The father, pressing himself against her belly, kissing her with ridiculous violence on the neck and mouth, prepares to make love blindly, without worrying about her, as on so many other occasions. But in the end he must surrender to the prostration to which her terrible morning pain has reduced him, trembling: he still remains for a moment on top of Lucia, like

a dead body. He then turns away from her, without looking at her, and lies down again, humiliated and still exalted, on her bed.

There he remains, once again a victim of the attacks of pain that he tries to hide, pale, exhausted to the point of weakness, exhausted, looking at the void already filled by the breath of light, which has ceased to be the wonderful light of dawn and has become the disgusting glare of any given day.

18

GRACE AND MEASURES OF THE "DISPOSED OF THE WORLD"

The morning has advanced, the sun is strong. The trees have lost their mystery: that sense of brotherhood (they have once again locked themselves in their simple wild and expressionless silence, oppressed by something greater than themselves and to which they surrender, humbly).

In this already high sun (high for the master who sleeps late, although in reality it is only nine in the morning) the postman Angelito arrives with his joy from other worlds, from other towns.

Emilia opens the door for him. Her postman delivers her first mail to him. She takes it. The brief silent dialogue, usual between them, follows. Angelito makes a few clown faces, which above all make him laugh. And as usual he, the guide, makes fun of the peasant maid...

But this time, miracle!, Emilia opens her mouth, makes a human sound, articulates a few words... As if it were a matter of state, the postman with the curls learns that there is a problem of which he becomes a confidant. .

Blessed by this new perspective that life offers him, Angelito follows Emilia, with the face of great occasions. Emilia heads inside the house (so big that she could run through its rooms on a bicycle, as Angelito says). Finally they reach the place where the shoes are shined. The guest's shoes (otherwise almost immaculate in their light color) are there, questioning, in front of the four eyes that look at them. They are of a kind that Emilia does not know: modern shoes, high up to the ankles, made of a material that is certainly not leather, but she is not suede either: how to clean them? This is the problem. But Angelito's eyes are smiling: he knows modern things and knows that a special pomade works well for those shoes, but that he also

uses any pomade, including glitter for hair. Suspicious, Emilia takes the test; and the two, allies for once, dedicate themselves to the sacred shoes.

When things seem to be settled and the problem finds a happy solution, Little Angel leaves as he arrived: forgotten about everything, he disappears to other places, other people, other worlds from which he has been sent.

Emilia continues lovingly cleaning the shoes. Once her delicate task is finished, very slowly, as if she were carrying a secret offering, she crosses the corridor (through which, at dawn, her father had passed) and leaves them at the door of Pedro's room and the guest. .

19

OUTDOOR BREAKFAST

The whole family - like on good summer days, when the holidays have not yet started - has breakfast in the garden. Emilia serves the table.

Everyone is quiet. The only noise - which seems dazzling - is that of a stupid distant radio.

Although they hide an unshared secret, the looks that Lucía, Pedro and Emilia only have for the guest are full of hesitation and purity. Only Odetta, secluded in her sickly white rabbit's pallor, seems to ignore it: but she does so almost manifestly. And this disturbs her. The truth is that she is the only one lost in other thoughts, the only one who does not look at the guest. Because the father also - after the events of the night - looks at him with eyes that he has never had before.

20

CAN A FATHER BE MORTAL?

The father, sick, is lying in bed. His wife, his children, and the guest surround him. Everyone is gathered there, silently following the exact and comforting gestures of the doctor (at this moment he gives a hypodermic injection). The father's illness is not serious: but the father is as if outside the world, abandoned to a kind of mysterious laziness: turned into a child by illness and pain, which at some moments is unbearable and at others subsides. In any case, a dark and invariable obstinacy dominates him, almost in spite of himself, in the eyes that search: the desire to save himself.

The doctor leaves. Lucía and Pedro follow him, in silence. So, Odetta and the guest remain in the father's room. Odetta does not leave her father's bedside for a moment; She has set up her headquarters there and does not

plan to move. She acts as his nurse, faithful as a little sister in the odor of holiness. And it must be said that she conducts herself in everything in the best way. At the same time, her anxiety does not prevent him from acting in accordance with her essential sense of humor; Furthermore, her usual uncertainty in doing things becomes touching and brave when she manages to do them well, like in these moments.

However, the father's longing glances rarely turn towards her (on whom they only rest from time to time, with old tenderness): they are all directed at the guest. It is the guest whom the father looks for, as soon as his wife and his son leave with the doctor. Odetta knows this, because from the first days of his illness, his father has expressed an absolute and almost childish need to always have his guest with him.

Now, when he looks at him, with the simple eyes of someone who asks another for a sacrifice - for a selfishness of which he himself is a victim - he has a kind of light, almost a slight smile.

The expression in his sick eyes is that of someone who finally understands something that relieves himself and, above all, those who are next to him: something that resolves a difficult and even a little ridiculous situation.

The father extends his large hand, hindered by illness, over the sheet, reaches for a book, takes it, holds it before his eyes, and with the uncertain voice of someone weakened by anemia, after laboriously searching for the page, start reading:

"But even in that disgusting task, Iván Ilic found relief. The peasant bartender Gerasim was in charge of taking that away. Gerasim was a young, clean, fresh peasant..."

These are words from a book by Tolstoy, the Stories, opened to a page of "The Death of Ivan Ilic."

Wearily, the father hands it to the guest so he can continue reading. The guest quickly takes the book and immediately immerses himself in reading:

"...always cheerful, serene. At first, the appearance of that man, neatly dressed in Russian style, in charge of this disgusting task, disturbed Ivan Ilic.

"Once, after getting up from the chair, unable to lift his pants, he fell onto the soft seat and, terrified, began to look at his naked thighs, with the muscles clearly visible, without strength.

"Gerasim entered in his thick boots, spreading around him the pleasant smell of the fresh winter air, with an agile and strong step. And without looking at Ivan Ilic, retaining, so as not to offend the sick man, the joy of life that shone in him. the face, he went towards the chair.

"-Gerasim, help me, please. Come here," Ivan Ilic said weakly.

"Gerasim approached.

"-I can't, without help... And I have fired Dimitri.

"Gerasim approached. With his arms as strong and agile as his step, he embraced him, lifted him skillfully, gently, and kept him on his feet. With his other hand he pulled up his pants. He wanted to make him sit down, but Ivan Ilic begged him Gerasim, without effort, without even grabbing him, guided him, as if carrying him on tenterhooks, towards the couch.

"-Thank you. You do everything so well!

"Gerasim smiled once again. He wanted to leave. But Ivan Ilic felt so good with him that he did not want to let him leave.

"Please, bring that chair closer to me. Put it under my legs. I feel better when I can have my legs raised. Raise my legs yourself, can you?"

"-Why not? Of course I can.

"Gerasim lifted his legs and began to talk to him. Strangely enough, Iván Ilic felt better while Gerasim held his legs.

"Since then, Iván Ilic called Gerasim from time to time. She put her legs on his shoulders and chatted with him. Gerasim did all this with ease, willingly, with a simplicity and kindness that moved Ivan Ilic. The health, the strength, the vigor in all other men offended him; But Gerasim's strength and vitality overwhelmed Ivan Ilic, far from embittering him."

21

CEREMONIAL OF A MAN SICK (BACK TO CHILDHOOD) WITH A BOY HEALTHY (PROMOTED TO YOUNG OLD MAN)

The father moans in his messy bed: it is one of the moments when the viscera seem to rise to his throat and he is convulsed by inhuman pain.

Maddened by this pain, he abandons himself to all the miserable and humiliating acts that no modesty, no measure, no good education can force

him to repress or hide.

Odetta's heroic eyes look at him helplessly. Finally the door to the room opens and the guest enters. Odetta's eyes turn to him, but immediately return to the suffering body of her father.

The host's body is like a carnal breath, full of physical health and, therefore - due to the cruelty of just things - also moral health. With his body intact, a measure of another world - that of saving innocence - the guest will sit on the edge of the bed, ready to fulfill his duty, perhaps with pity, but without any humiliating compassion.

The father has seen him, as in a dream, with his eyes cloudy and full of the poor abjection of someone who is in the hands of others; He has already done the calculation and waits...

Then the young man - with gestures that seem habitual - helps him free his legs, one after the other, from the sheets. He does it slowly, between one convulsion and another that arise from the depths of his father's sick viscera, making him contract his lips, covering his eyes, covering his white forehead with sweat. Then, very slowly, one after the other, with the painful collaboration of the patient, he rests his legs on his shoulders, and holds them by the ankles with his hands.

In front of him, a young peasant who looks at him with his thin veil of irony and with his sweet maternal concern, the father, like Iván Ilic, lies stretched out on the bed, with his head lost on the headboard, but exalted - at least that's how he appears. believe- because of the pain. He looks at the guest's face - which has not the slightest wrinkle, the slightest blush - between his two feet, painfully supported on both shoulders. He looks at the consoling health, the youth, whose fruit seems infinite. He smiles barely, to himself, at his own pain, at his alienation, at his need for help.

22

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE FATHER IN LOVE

**The summer sun is still there,
triumphant, in the already declining garden
towards the end of his glory, towards the
first colors of rust, so
poetic among the grays of the air**

lombardo.

Between the still warm shadow and the no longer so hot sun, the father is lying on a lounge chair, enjoying the world, full of joy.

Next to the convalescent father are the guest and Odetta, who are reading.

But while the guest is really immersed in his reading, Odetta pretends to read, perhaps with hatred for the book in her hands.

Her eyes look around her, restless, at the things that for her father are loaded with meaning - as if they were exploding in the intensity of the light - and for her they are nothing more than tiring, painful shadows. But her gaze frequently turns to the serene face of her father.

The illness has transformed him and has altered - before those eyes of Odetta - a reality that seemed incorruptible: the reality of the omnipotent and immortal father.

Suddenly, Odetta's devotion to her father has ceased to be mystical - as during the long childhood that does not want to die - and, measured against reality, it has become uncertain and dramatic: it is the moment in which love increases or ends.

Perhaps this is why Odetta's gaze flees from the strange words of the book and questions the face of this new father lying before her.

And here the father's eyes open, lively, and rest, as always, on the guest's face. Odetta follows that gaze once again; but although until this moment she had immediately left the guest to return to her father, she now stops for the first time to observe that boy whom she has always ignored. Deep down, she sees him for the first time.

The father wants to ask the guest what he reads. A question without curiosity, asked out of pure sympathy, out of abundance of heart and desire to talk. The boy raises his serious light blue eyes from Rimbaud's little book and, without any surprise, with his voice a little hoarse, begins to read exactly the words where he had arrived...

But while he reads, Odetta, in one of those silent and graceful impulses of her young life, gets up suddenly, leaves the book on the chair and disappears into the house. For a short time: she immediately returns with her photographic camera, destined for the cult of the family and her father:

the conservative cult (so many times, over the centuries, entrusted to virgins).

She begins to take photographs absently and obstinately: the souvenir photographs of the days of her father's convalescence. She brings the camera close to her eye and, click, fixes the tiny image of her, a future rare sample of the album.

But unlike what would have happened a short time before, Odetta does not choose the convalescent father as the sole protagonist of these photographs. The sudden discovery - made through her father - of the guest's presence is already an inevitable fact, which not only imposes itself on her as a novelty, but also seems to make her incapable of controlling herself.

Through the tiny rectangle of the lens, she observes him without being seen. She looks at his face, his shoulders, his large chest, his brief lap of a young father, his distraction that hides a violence of which, innocently, he does not seem to realize, or whose naturalness he ignores. .

Soon Odetta stops taking photographs and simply looks at the guest who, in turn, raises his eyes to her.

But Odetta doesn't want it, she doesn't accept it. With the fury of her neurotic and impenetrable grace, like an idol, she escapes from her: she is going to leave the camera at home.

**Then he comes out again. It stops,
expressionless, before the guest and him
take hands Thus it forces him to
follow her. He stands up, obeying
to that only invitation, to that naive
ceremonial, and crossing the garden the
He continues to his room.**

23

GIRL IN THE DECK VIRILITY

It is not, in truth, her room, but the one she had when she was a child, abandoned now, with the curtains half loose, a white bed, somewhat fussy, and a dark chest under the window.

The guest sits on the edge of the bed, a little uncomfortable, because the bed is high and he must remain with his legs open and stretched. That's why, when Odetta - after fixing on him eyes that contain nothing except the senseless suspicion of a wild animal - leans over the chest, takes her precious albums from it and turns around, she finds nothing better than to go and sit down. between the guest's legs, with his back against the bed. Or rather, she snuggles between them, but quite comfortably, because the boy's legs, enclosed by the lightly stretched fabric, are like two columns between which the wild Odetta can relax naturally, almost with capricious elegance. It is true that as soon as she turned around she would find herself before that protuberance, immaculate and powerful, at the bottom of both protective columns. But Odetta does not turn around: his gaze passes almost pleadingly from the photo album to the guest's face, who smiles at him, kind in his strength.

Odetta raises her thick eyeballs towards him, half-opening her enchanted adenoid mouth, and questions him; then she lowers her eyes again to the album and leafs through it, searching with minuteness similar to her absence for the other highlights of her family memories.

And the guest smiles at him. But suddenly one of her hands, in a natural and unexpected gesture, rests on her thigh, on her sex, behind Odetta's back. At that gesture, she turns and looks at her hand - always with the same minute absence of it - of her, then she raises her eyes towards the guest, trying not to change her expression, maintaining the same light in them. But the guest smiles at her, fatherly and motherly, more warmly, and as if she were a dead and inert thing, he takes her under the armpits and lifts her off the ground to her own height.

The photo album falls to the floor and the mouths of the two young people join together. It is Odetta's first kiss: she receives it rigid and full of his intense flesh, kneeling, supported by the powerful arms of the boy, for whom she is so light...

24

"THE FIRST PARADISE. ODETTA..."

The First Paradise, Odetta, was that of the father.

There was an alliance of the senses in the son

—male or female—

due to the adoration of something unique.
And the world, around,
It only had one design: that of the desert.
In that dark and endless light,
In the circle of the desert like a mighty lap,
The boy enjoyed Paradise.
Remember: there was only one Father (there was no mother).
Your protection
He had an adult smile, but young
and slightly ironic, as always has someone who protects
to the weak, to the tender – man or little woman.
You have been to this First Paradise
until today: and since you are a woman
You will never lose his memory nor stop venerating him.
You will be adorer, by nature... But first
to return to you, to warn you against dangers
of religion, I want to tell you the story
of your brother, who has the same sex as God.
He too, in times when he was truly a child
(even more of a child than when he was in the womb
or when he sipped his first milk from the breast),
He lived in that First Paradise of the Father.
Hatred arose suddenly, without reason.
The lap that was like a sun covered in clouds
sweet and strong, the lap of that Man
immense and unique like the desert,
became a dark bottom of pants,
he became debased, he lost his innocence
in the fear of being nothing more than human.
The day had arrived
in which the pure horizon of the desert
It is lost in a silence and in a less perfect color,
and the first palm trees begin to be seen
and the first path appears, silent, between the dunes.
Thus the child crossed the desert of the First
Paradise: that remained behind, in the dreamed time

of a green region furrowed by transparent rows
of poplars, or in a large provincial city.
The boy fell headlong onto the ground,
lost the name of Lucifer and acquired, at the same time,
that of Abel and that of Cain (this, at least, is valid for some pink,
Mediterranean lands, and for these, green,
where the nuns teach it to a lay Odetta).
These lands were the Second Paradise.
There was a mother there (let's call her adoptive) who, in your case,
It had rich skins that smelled of early springs.
How terrestrial, how sweetly terrestrial,
It was her sweetness as a petit-bourgeois girl
who does not desire for himself all the dear things learned,
but for that little son of yours who walks,
He too, pearled by the freshness of the primroses...
A river (in your case, the Po) ran in that Paradise:
because the house where the "adoptive" parents live
After marriage he is always near a river.
And if not from a river, from the sea or from a chain of hills.
The fruits grew by themselves, with wonderful names:
apples, grapes, blackberries, plums; and the flowers, the useless flowers,
They counted no less than the fruits: also their names
They were seductive: primroses, or sunflowers,
or lilies, or muguetes and even orchids, at parties.
The sun, up there, was certainly a friend,
sweetened by the innocent idea that the mother
He told his little son that he was holding his hand;
and just as he was born in the morning, he died at dusk,
giving place to those stars that the son, obedient,
He barely had to see to immediately abandon them to their silence.
But that mother was not innocent, as he believed!
Thus, the same irrational hatred - which had arisen by itself,
like a fruit or a flower, in the First Paradise-
He was also born in the Second.
Our existence is nothing more than a senseless identification

with that of living beings that something immensely ours brings us closer.

Smoke, then, the sinful mother before the fruit
whose mystery resurrected the days of the First Father.
so previous to those of the green Lombard Paradise!
The desert sun shone again
on that small apple, desire for a modest existence.
The usual sun of each day remained apart,
isolated as in an unexpected winter; while the other,
great, it burned: a measure with which to calculate centuries and
miseries.

The mother, then, who was nothing but her own child,
She bit with maternal innocence, with filial unconsciousness,
that summer fruit. Then the second father,
the adoptive
—who, before the first, was like the lich
winter sun compared to that of the First Summers—
followed his example, weak man of the earth,
easily tempted and easily corrupted.
But we had also identified with him:
because as we ourselves we could not exist:
We could exist only if we were the father, the mother.
We sin with their same mouths, with their same hands.
And the First Father also expelled us from the Second Paradise.
There are two Paradises that we have lost!
Holding hands with our parents we head through the streets of the
world.

Lucifer distinguished himself from Abel and followed his destiny:
ended in the blackest darkness. Abel died,
killing himself with the name of Cain.
In short, there was only one son left, only one son.
After many millennia there was the first seed,
and another millennium after this event
He was designated a patron King of multiplied men.
Ah, so many colored amphorae! We had to earn our bread
and this began to take over us, and to lose us

in a false idea of ourselves, in the current hell.
Your brother Pedro is heading down that path.
But why, when exposing this Theory of the Two Paradises to you.
Have I spoken about your brother Pedro and not about you?
It's simple: because if his man-child story didn't exist,
your own story couldn't be compared to anything
and we couldn't even begin to talk about it.
There was no Lucifera, nor an Abela, nor a Caina:
you should have remained, therefore, in the First Paradise.
Or at least, that's the one you should remember, with the true Father:
And so, in effect. That's why you're infinitely older.
that your adoptive father, with whom you are in love,
that your adoptive mother, named Lucia,
May your brother Pedro, example of all existence.
You, poor girl, have identified yourself with each of them:
and you don't know that you existed before they were born,
sole worshiper, obedient to the First Father.
What should be worth more: your identification or your being?
You don't know how to choose, tender Odetta, because you are blind:
This is how you have chosen, this is how you have lived. and you
debate
uselessly, lost among a too beautiful memory
and a reality that takes you from dream to madness.

25

FROM OWNER TO OWNED

The father and the young guest drive by car (the Mercedes that reveals the master in the father) along the long, narrow paved roads in the south of the Milanese countryside.

But at this point, we think it's fair to stop calling the father simply "father" and give him his name, which is Paul. Although a first name, any name, seems absurd when attributed to a father: in truth, in a certain way it strips him of his authority, desacralizes him, takes him back to his old condition of son, thus exposing him to all the unfortunates. , dark and anonymous chances of children.

Between Pablo and the guest there is a disturbed silence, although the truth is that Pablo is the only one disturbed; The guest simply remains silent, delicate and obedient: he is, in truth, the son, with full rights, and since his quality of father is potential and future, it is therefore seen as all the more present and undoubtable. So behind the youthful, distracted and generous mask of the son there is a fruitful and happy father, while behind the furrowed, abstracted and greedy mask of the authoritarian father there is a disappointing and anxious son. On any stretch of the road, a deserted stretch, the Mercedes stops: the father leaves the wheel and gets out of the car to get back in on the opposite side. The guest replaces him behind the wheel, very satisfied, like any boy his age. It is fatal: as soon as you resume driving, the car runs at at least double the speed. The transparent cathedrals of the poplars against the ash sky, still terribly cold, swallow it with increasing voracity, towards a midday where there is no sun: on the contrary, the plowed fields darken and already seem to have the color of twilight. It is Lower Lombardy, which instead of opening the North towards a more joyful and sensual south, seems to surround it like a ditch. But it is precisely towards the Baja, towards the wild and secluded groves of the Po, towards the thickets that can be so tenderly warm in the first, still frozen, days of spring, where lovers are instinctively drawn, by tradition. .

The conversation that Pablo wants to start is undoubtedly serious (the young man is a little distracted by driving, by the desire to take the curves); but he lacks courage, precisely as if he were a boy.

Talk? Oh, shouldn't he, too, act before deciding? Isn't he, before his children and his wife, the champion of an authenticity that makes a man a bourgeois man, sculpted in his respectability and in his rules (already natural) like a statue? Of marble? Isn't talking about problems, instead of genuine feelings or desires, still an excuse?

The host's body is next to Pablo, intact and strong like that of a peasant; Furthermore, he has that prestige that comes from being a bourgeois and cultured boy (that is, with a deep feeling of his own dignity). It is possible to touch and caress the body of a peasant because he has no defense: he is like a dog before his master, he lacks (in front of him) any moral principles that he can defend. Above all, he is incapable of irony. In short, he is obedient, perhaps in spite of himself.

But the guest's body, generous in flesh but without softness, abundant but pure - all filial fruitfulness - burns there, next to Pablo, in front of the steering wheel, as if he were naked, from the grace of the chest and the tense arms to the violence. of the thighs cinched by the folds of the almost summer fabric.

The father – Pablo! – looks at him and before deciding, caresses him.

He runs his hand - he has only caressed his wife or a series of beautiful and elegant lovers, in the proper way - very lightly over her hair, her neck, her shoulder. The guest smiles happily, without the slightest surprise, with his childish and generous smile.

Even more: she turns radiantly towards Pablo, thus giving the caress she has received from him a festive naturalness. He is grateful and rewards Pablo with his youthful joy, almost humbly, like someone born from a lower class: he makes him understand that in this gesture - senseless for a bourgeois - there is no violation. However, in that smile the sweetness of the person who gives himself does not shine through even for a moment. On the contrary, there is only the security of the one who gives.

This makes Pablo even more of a son. His indecisive caress (after which his hand has immediately retracted) is not a sign of possession, but rather the supplication of the one he possesses. Now: Pablo is one of those men who have always been accustomed to possession. He has possessed it throughout his life (by birth and by inheritance); He has never glimpsed the idea of not possessing.

26

THE YELLOW REEDS IN THE BANKS OF THE PO

The Po emerges suddenly, in one of its meanders, as large as a square, melancholic (the curly and yellowish waters, due to a beginning of flood, run vertiginously, in a kind of devastating concentration, towards Cremona, towards Mantua, towards the East) .

The increasingly dense rows of poplars (almost jungle-like in thickness) had announced that appearance. Like the square fields glimpsed between those rows, the poplars themselves grew greener, as if spring had been slower and sadder in that place. A bit of sunshine, however, had beaten the clouds, piercing the stagnant gloom and uniting the enormous amphitheater

of aspen trees (which stretched out of sight down the slope) to an intensely serene sky.

The car stops at the edge of the embankment. The guest and Pablo come down and remain motionless in the sun for a while. Afterwards, Pablo, almost smiling, now definitively inferior, with his bronze face lined with authoritarian wrinkles, remains next to the car, unsure, intimidated, not knowing what to do, where to go. But the guest, also smiling - with that smile of someone who loses nothing and, on the contrary, gives everything without staining his candid grace with pride or disdain -, runs obliquely down the slope, still yellow, dry and wintry. When he reaches the bottom, like a boy going to play ball, he sinks among the bushes that advance towards the waters.

The earth is soft and fragrant, but not humid. That is why the vegetation is still almost dry, except for some bushes covered with small white flowers. On the ground, on the humus still fragrant from winter and spring, there are still the leaves of the previous year, rotten or dry.

In that kind of enormous terrace, at the end of the slope, next to the river, there are cracks that cannot be seen from above. The guest disappears in one of those cracks to reappear, further away, lower, among the reddish bushes, of a rust color that, however, announces the splendor of new and tender colors (only the brambles already have the red of blood).). Then it hides in another, deeper crevice, which undoubtedly leads to the water level.

Pablo follows him, walking through that terrain on which he had not set foot for at least forty years (since when he was a child). He is disoriented like a sick man fresh out of a hospital. It is of no use to have played sports in convenient places; There is a kind of radical hostility between his body and that no man's land, barely perfumed with an aroma that is at the same time so intense.

When he reaches the guest, after painfully descending the second crack, he sees him lying on the ground: one hand under the back of his head, the lit cigarette in the other (with an air that is a little arrogant and even a little vicious), his legs stretched out. Pablo approaches him, with a kind of reverential fear at that sovereign and innocent abandonment...

"THE HEBREWS WERE ON THEIR WAY..."

The Hebrews headed towards the desert.

Throughout the day, from the moment the horizon was outlined against the red of the dawn with its dark, flat rock dunes, or with its sand dunes, also dark, warped, until the hour when it was outlined again identical against the red of twilight, the desert was always the same.

His inhospitality had only one form. It was repeated invariably at any point where the Hebrews were, detained or on the way.

With every mile, the horizon moved a mile further away: thus, between the gaze and the horizon, the distance never changed. The desert underwent the transformations of the desert: it was either a plateau of rock, or an extension of stones (huge and bare, like on the peripheries of the metropolis, and with the same faded color as steel), or a lake of dark sand, striated by an infinity of capricious and identical borders. But these variants occurred within what was nothing other than the desert, within what resembled nothing other than the desert. And these variants of rock, stone or sand were for the Hebrews nothing more than the sign of repetition, the possibility of perceiving a monotony that penetrated the bones like plague fever. The landscape of the opposite of life was reiterated, therefore, without anything obfuscating or interrupting it. It was born from itself, it continued through itself, it expired in itself: but it did not reject man. On the contrary, he welcomed him, inhospitable but not an enemy, adverse to his nature, more deeply related to his reality.

Thus, when walking through an immensity where they always seemed motionless; finding again, a mile or a hundred miles later, the same dune with the same identical folds drawn by the wind; by not recognizing any difference between the northern and southern horizons, or between the tiny dark hills of the east and those of the west; Perceiving as equally gigantic, both in front and behind them, a small pebble perched on the profile of a dune, and seeing in all the torrents undermined in the arid color of coal always the same torrent, the Hebrews began to conceive the idea of Unity.

They perceived it the first day, after walking fifty miles in the desert; They felt invaded by it on the second day, after traveling another fifty miles without anything changing. Until they had nothing but that idea.

The Unity of the desert was like a dream that does not allow sleep and from which it is not possible to wake up.

One was the desert, and it was One one step further, One two steps further. One despite all the steps that the Hebrews could take. The shapes of the palm trees, the waters, the wells, the streets, the houses were gradually lost in memory; until all the complication of the human world was left behind and seemed non-existent.

The Unity of the desert was always fixed before the eyes of the Hebrews, who, however, could not go crazy. On the contrary, they felt welcomed by that Unique thing that they traveled through, aware - but, deep down, already happy - that they would never be able to leave its infinitely distant confines.

The habit of the idea of Unity that the desert assumed in the senses, projecting itself as something immutable in the interiority of those who cross it without ever being able to leave it again (even if it is totally open), and the conviction that it was impossible to forget it even for a moment and no matter how much effort was made, it became almost a second nature that coexisted with the first and little by little it corroded it, destroyed it, took its place: just as thirst slowly kills the body that feeds it. suffers. The Hebrews walked, and even if they didn't think about it, they were constantly accompanied by the idea of all that darkness and all that light that had entered inside them.

The Unity of the design of the desert became, therefore, something that was within the men who suffered from it. They were invaded by it. It was the endless pain of a sick person who, contracting, turns from one side to the other of the bed: and in one part he feels the desert and in the other part he feels the desert again. And at the moment when he turns to change position, he feels at the same time the desire to forget it and the desire to recover it.

The Hebrews arrived at a new oasis, along the course of a wadi. Some crows were flying; a few camels were grazing; The nomads had pitched their tents around the well and there they were, watching, interrupting their daily life for a moment, with soft eyes like those of valuable dogs and gazelles.

But even in the realm of the new variety of recovered life - lost and ruminating in the deep peace of the sun - the idea of the desert persisted in

the Hebrews: and it was nothing other than something Unique.

For the rest, all you had to do was turn around to see that it was there, behind a palm tree, a wall, a rocky rump where the village of the tribe of another race was gathered.

The apostle Paul left from the oasis: from the tiny city of sand, alone like a cemetery around its well, and whose life consisted of not dying. The deadly disease was seen in the greenish waters of the well, in the decrepit old age of the trunks, in the dust inflamed by the sun in which everything had been crumbling for millennia. However, there was human life, with all its forms; and although hampered or with hoarse voices due to the silence that came from the desert, the children laughed with their eyes sparkling with sweetness and with their weightless bodies; The young people incubated their desire, among the rich rags and the bandages tight on the sweet and disgusting features of the bandits; the market hummed; groups of women quickly returned from shopping, like so many old priests; The old people remained leaning against the low walls, with putrid livers and the eyes of sick and calm beasts.

The desert began to reappear in all that it was: and to see it like this - desert and nothing more than desert - it was enough to be in it. Paul walked, walked, and his step was a confirmation. Once the last tops of the palm trees had disappeared, the men were distributed in picturesque groups, the obsession was restarted, that is, moving forward while always remaining at the same point.

**Yes, the desert with its horizon
front and its horizon behind,
always identical, imposed a state of
delirium: every fiber of the body
Paul existed in function of him: he was
all dark stone; or coagulated sand
in the wrinkles marked by the
wind; or gray powder, with sparkles
of metal, where the wind raised
regular and sinister stretch marks, of a
whitish, cadaverous color. All**

**what Paul thought was
contaminated and dominated by that
presence. All the things of your
life, that wasn't - now it looked good
of course- the simple life of the oasis,
They were unified by that Thing
that he always experienced the same
way, because it was always the same.**

He couldn't go crazy because, deep down, as a unique form, as something that is only himself, it gave him a deep feeling of peace: as if he had returned not to his mother's lap, but to his father's lap.

In truth, like a father he looked at the desert from any point of its infinitely open horizon. There was nothing to protect Pedro from that gaze: wherever he was - that is, always at the same point -, beyond the dark expanses of sand or stones, that gaze reached him without any difficulty: with the same deep peace, naturalness and violence with which the sun shone, unalterable.

Days and nights passed.

What were they for?

To cover and discover a single Thing, which was there, making itself covered and discovered without anxiety, through long twilights full of a melancholy totally without sound. But that Thing did not make itself covered and revealed by night and day as an object, but as a master who had resolved his own passivity, abandoning himself to that rhythm whose origins were as deep in time as his own.

Thus, when the sun was reborn at a point on the horizon without any distinctive feature, suddenly, as if nothing real had happened, the desert was around, with the design and light of the previous day, and with the terrible ardor of the sun that returned to light. identify with danger and death.

Pablo walked that path without history, in that complete identification between the light of the sun and the consciousness of living.

But how clean, pure, uncontaminated everything was! In that vital and burning void, the darkness, the tortuousness, the confusion, the contagions, the stench of life were not even conceivable, but only the unity: the deep blue of the sky, the darkness of the sand, the line of the horizon. , the features of the terrain were not forms that opposed each other, alternately excluding or prevailing over each other: no, they were a single form and, as such, that form was also always omnipresent.

28

SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANGELITO

As if playing the magic flute on an invisible and joyful flute, Little Angel arrives: he crosses the garden, presses the bell, waits, smiles

radiantly at Emilia who comes to open the door for him (both have become friends since the guest has arrived at the house), He first delivers a rose, as a joke, then a telegram, and leaves.

Our bourgeois family is sitting at the table, with its guest as it has been so many times in the course of this story (lunch is full of grace: every detail of the table could be the detail of a fresco from the times when the production was human).

Bent over his plate, each diner eats in silence. Everyone cultivates within themselves the secret glances of love towards the guest, as something that only concerns them.

In fact, the love they feel for the guest is not something that brings them closer, something that suppresses all defense, like on those occasions when it is possible, naively, to enjoy or suffer in common.

All family members have been equalized by their secret love, by their belonging to the guest: there is no longer any difference between one and the other. The look of each one has the same meaning: but uniformed like this, they certainly do not constitute a church. (No matter how sacred the silence of that lunch is.)

Emilia arrives without making a noise - she too with that secret that makes her equal to her masters, although leaving her in her doglike poverty - and as if it were a privilege reserved for her, she delivers the telegram to the guest. The boy communicates his content out loud:

—I must leave tomorrow.

APPENDIX TO THE FIRST PART

THIRST FOR DEATH

I am destroyed, or at least transformed
until I don't recognize myself, because in me
the law is destroyed,
until now
I had joined others:
a normal boy, or at least not abnormal,
or abnormal like everyone else... Although
(is it necessary to say it?) full
of all the mistakes that my class
and my social level in it

entails - and that privilege repairs.
Despite this,
me, before you came into my life
—questioning her
and transforming it into a pile of rubble-
He was like all my classmates.
It is, therefore, through the destruction of everything
what made me equal to the others
how do I become
-unheard of and unacceptable thing- in. a DIFFERENT.
This difference is revealed to me suddenly:
until now it had remained hidden
due to the unstable intoxication he had acquired
(getting excited about being able to keep it quiet
everything forever), with his presence.
The one who has made me different (a wonderful thing!) has
been by my side. And she has distracted me like this with the intensity
and the flavor
inexpressible that their sex
had given to my life.
The fear and anxiety of no longer having you by my side
satisfying my desire to see you and touch you there
where you are my companion, although younger and fresher,
like a child, and more mature and powerful,
like a father who does not know to what extent
Its simple member is divine;
that fear and anxiety are very different from consciousness
of having to lose you for so long,
maybe forever.
And the awareness of loss
It makes me aware of my diversity.
What will happen from tonight?
The pain of goodbye, Linda
with this tragic feeling of a future
that I will spend in the company of a new Pedro,
totally different from me.

And what do they respond, in silence, to all this,
your eyes serious, friendly and darkly ruthless
(or already distant).? Your intention
Maybe it's throwing myself into the street of diversity,
to the bottom and without compromises?

...

Do you mean that if this love has been born
It's useless to go back,
Is it useless to feel it as pure and simple destruction?
What about the pain of separation
I could find someone to replace you,
and recreate those feelings in me
of ridiculous tenderness and bestial passivity
born so recently and interrupted so abruptly?

...

And if you have been a father without wrinkles or gray hair,
a father like he was when he was a few years older than me,
Couldn't a father like that replace you?
Although this is inconceivable and frightening,
o, perhaps, precisely for this reason?

IDENTIFICATION OF INCEST WITH REALITY

The things that seem fairer and simpler

Aren't they, in short, the ones that reveal themselves to be the darkest
and most difficult?

Isn't life itself, in its naturalness,
the one that is mysterious, and not its complications?
The goodbye between you, who is leaving, and me, a girl
that only in a year or two you could get married,
It is the most tragic thing that can happen in the world.
And also...

Until your arrival I had lived
between -forgive the eternal word- normal people:
but I wasn't; and he had to protect me
(and be protected) to hide

the painful symptoms of my class illness,
that is, the emptiness in which he lived (sinister health).
That disease continually threatened,
in me, with coming to light,
with unmasking myself and unmasking everything.
Then he took it with... humor:
as an object of pride, as an aristocratic habit
that he cultivated, a little greenhouse flower, in the warmth of the home.
Exactly (think!) as if it were
of a grotesque and undaunted opening
towards anarchic ideas, or a little subversive, frozen places,
certainly never visited by any of my peers...
You have returned me to normal.
You made me find the right solution
(and blessed) for my soul and my sex.
The miraculous presence of your body
(which contains a spirit that is too great)
as a young male and as a father
my wild and dangerous fear as a child has disappeared...
But now, in this goodbye, not only
I fall back again,
but I go back even further.
Pain is a cause of relapse
much more serious than evil
which preceded the brief cure.
The caresses you give me in silence,
maybe to console me, maybe
—with the cruelty of every subsequent act—
to push me deeper, deeper
in my pain, they have a meaning
absolutely dark.
What do you want to suggest and propose to me with that mystery?
Maybe someone who could replace you?
And could that someone be someone who,
like you, will replace the father for me,
Peter's father, the First Father?

And why not, directly, my own father?
Do you want to suggest to me,
through terrible and silent words of justice,
the identification between a truth
always unimaginable and incestuous,
and all the complete reality?

THE LOSS OF EXISTENCE

My husband's interest in his industry

He was born with it, he was indistinguishable from it,
formed a whole with something inexpressible
what was his life with his work,
If I had been born a peasant
would have had the same interest in the land
and the harnesses that are used to work it;
If I had been a sailor (until a century ago)
he would have had the same interest in the sea and his ship.
The truth is that he has worked all his life
in a large industry inherited from his father
(the creator), driven by a natural... interest.
Like any historical era, ours too
has reconstructed nature, and therefore naturalness.
As a great bourgeois of Upper Italy,
My husband Pablo has lived his nature naturally
(as if the factory were the land or the sea).
His interest in his work and his profit (huge,
and unfair, as our enemies define it)
It is the same one that drives us to act in dreams.
Necessary and indistinct. In short,
has never had an objective interest,
pure and cultural, for existence.
As for Odetta, are the interests
Objective, pure and cultural their family cults?
Maybe they are naive,
intensity, perhaps they are absent from any desire for profit:
but deep down they are like exorcisms

compared to a genuine religion,
or like games, compared to real work.
She has made copies of those interests
and entertains himself with them
(although perhaps feeling its emptiness
and noticing it only through anguish).
Pedro studies: he is obliged to have,
even within the walls of our best urban school,
some obligatory interest in something...
In this days
are reading the Banquet... Can you do it
with absolute impunity?
In my family, then, we all live life as it should be;
the ideas with which we judge ourselves
and to others, values and events,
They are, as they say, a common heritage
to our entire social world.
I, in this sense, was worse than everyone.
It's hard to say how I've lived:
how, to live, the naturalness of living was enough for me;
take care of my house, my affections,
as if she had been a peasant in her family lair,
that fights tooth and nail for existence.
How could I live in so much emptiness? And yet, he lived in it.
And that emptiness was, without me noticing it,
full of conventions, that is, of profound moral ugliness.
My natural grace (it seems) saved me:
but it was a wasted grace.
Like a garden in a place where no one passes.
It was... in my barbaric eyes (it seems),
in my mouth, in my high and sweet cheekbones...
in the forms of a slenderness (alas!) of an affected adolescent...
And without a doubt it was also in my heart,
shy but capable of feelings.
However, there it withered.
It looked like aging

(at the first paleness, at the first
damn wrinkles, still invisible). She would have withered
until dry - coinciding with the end
of a useless life - if you had not arrived.
You have filled with pure interest.
You have inflamed a life deprived of all interest.
And you have freed them from their dark tangle
all the wrong ideas that a bourgeois lady lives by:
the horrendous conventions, the horrendous humor,
the horrendous principles, the horrendous duties,
the horrendous thanks, the horrendous democracy, the horrendous
anti-communism, the horrendous fascism,
the horrendous objectivity, the horrendous smile.
Ah, how many things I know about myself, you will say. in a
conscience
acquired by magic - and I speak like in the monologue
of a tragic character.
It's strange: my pain has the accent
of naturalness and truth,
that are normally acquired at times
mortals of life:
does not seem to oppose him. Maybe because
what in me has destroyed your love
It is nothing other than my reputation as a chaste bourgeoisie...
And yet, as you caress me, understanding and merciless,
I wonder: Where do you want to drag me?
Towards something that, on the one hand, can, in some way,
compensate me and console me, on the other hand he cannot
but push myself further and further towards the precipice
that I have started to win
deciding my adultery with you?
Do you want to tell me, young as you are, that it is possible
the replacement of your body and your soul
for the body and soul of a boy who looks like you?
May your eyes have the light for me
bluish of desire mixed with tenderness?

And his large hands the rough and venerating weight
Who, by caressing, hurts without realizing it?
Let him be, in short, a grown man before my eyes...
like a son... until becoming
in the young barbarian who does not want obstacles in his rise?
And if because of his age he must be like my son
(his nakedness the sacrilege, his erection the impossible)
Why not my son, directly?
This absolutely extreme choice
—and without the slightest possibility of turning back—
Is it the only act that can save a life
of the absence of all interest and the crammed emptiness
of confused values?
A moral shame extreme to the point
to touch and grant oneself to the youngest boy of all
—the son himself transformed into a man—
Is it the only way to destroy all false justice
and live, even unjustly, in the truth?
But are these things that I can even imagine?

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE IDEA OF YEAH

So you have come to this house to destroy,
What have you destroyed in me?
You have simply destroyed
—with all my past life—
the idea I have always had of myself.
If it's been a long time, well,
that I have assumed the form that I was supposed to assume
and my figure was, in a way, perfect,
What do I have left, now?
I see nothing that can reintegrate me
to my identity. I look at you: you don't hear me
with impartiality -because you do not divide yourself into parts—
but with submission - because you give yourself fully to each one.
Yet how can your presence be so pure

consoling to the point of almost manifesting a clear desire for detachment?

What's the point of comforting me if you, loving it,
you could delay, maybe forever,
your game? But you have to leave:

There is not the slightest doubt about this.

Your mercy is therefore subordinate
to some other mysterious design.

Do you want to tell me (without speaking, simply
through the fact that you are a boy)
that you could be replaced, either
for my son or my daughter?

Totally insane proposal (preordained,
perhaps, by some dark will of mine)
and yet fair yes, although realized
(my son's naked member, my daughter's naked vulva),

It was just a symbol: and if through it

You will exhort me to the most total perdition,
to unhinge life from itself,
to keep it once and for all
out of order and tomorrow.

making all this the only real normality.

Maybe because the one who has loved you must
(like the rest of all men, who doesn't know)
to be able to recognize life at all costs,
in every moment? Recognize it and not just
know it, or just live it?

Am I - you say generously, using my trivial bourgeois language -
the most unthinkable exceptions,
more intolerable, further from the possibility
to be conceived and named,
those that are presented as the most effective means
to recognize life?

Exceptions that, however,

They can only be symbols

—if in reality, like all real things,

Are they made of nothing and destined for nothing?

COMPLICITY BETWEEN THE SUBPROLETARIAN AND GOD

I greet you for the last time, precisely

five minutes before leaving,

with the suitcases already packed

and the taxi warned.

For the last time and in a hurry: why? Maybe because

your poverty and your social inferiority

Do they have any value for me?

And that's why I lavish myself less with you

as if your body were second quality,

and your spirit had restless shocks,

stupid, angelic and hindered by a beast?

No, none of this.

I greet you badly, quickly and for the last time,

because I know that your pain is inconsolable

and you don't even need to ask for comfort.

You live all in the present.

Like the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field,

you don't think about tomorrow. Otherwise,

Have we ever spoken to each other? I have not changed

words with you, as if others had a conscience, and you didn't.

And yet, it is evident that you too,

Poor Emilia, girl of little price, excluded, despoiled by the world,

you have a conscience.

A conscience without words.

And therefore without quackery.

You don't have a beautiful soul. For all this,

the speed and lack of solemnity

in our greetings they are nothing more than the sign

of a mysterious complicity between the two of us.

The taxi has arrived...

You'll be the only one to know, when I'm gone,

that I will never return, and you will look for me

where you should look for me: you won't even look
the street through which I will walk away and disappear,
the street that, on the other hand, everyone else will look at, perplexed,
like for the first time, filled with a new meaning
In all its richness and its ugliness,
as it emerges into your consciousness.

SECOND PART

1

EMILIA'S COROLLARY

Emilia leaves the house with a large cardboard suitcase in her hand; She closes the door behind her in religious silence, as if she were fleeing. And in truth, she leaves secretly. She looks around. There is a deep stillness. She remains unsure. She barely reopens the door, she looks inside the house. The series of corridors and rooms, up to the great hall flooded by the sad light of the sun, is empty and deserted. She closes the door again. A satisfied, hard, possessed expression distorts her face: there is also something of sacred cunning in that expression.

She tiptoes down the ladder, carrying the suitcase like peasant women carry the bucket from the fountain: leaning to one side, with her arm outstretched, her hand red and swollen, and her other arm, the free one, swinging stupidly in the air. , without shyness.

She walks all the way through the garden, looking back, frowning, hesitant, lengthening her step, rocking her free arm even more to maintain the uncertain balance: but what is inside that large cardboard suitcase? Lead? There are all her riches and her memories, poor Emilia. She drags them after her heroically and, now, uselessly.

It's already on the street. The same reason why the day before, or a few days before, or at any previous time, the guest's taxi disappeared.

Today, the silence, the light are identical. The inhabitants of that place spend their days according to the rhythm of the same ideals. Art nouveau balconies and pergolas, 1900s balustrades, cement angles, squares of mosaics rise against the sky, above the little gardens with the gloomy and exhausted green of the miserable conceited pines, and even some horrible palm trees.

Emilia travels the entire rectilinear extension of that perspective, slowly, dragging her suitcase - which changes hands from time to time - until it becomes smaller in the background and disappears.

It reaches a large round square, with a green flowerbed in the center and a series of identical streets that open with the same perspectives. Big houses; The mist makes everything diffuse under the foliage of the urban chestnut trees. Trams and buses rotate incessantly around the square. Rivers of automobiles; To the noise of the engines, the infinite din, are now added the sirens: sirens at noon or in the afternoon or at any other time in the factories. Around Emilia, people don't seem to hear or see anything: like Emilia herself, anyway. Everyone waits under a shed, diligent, absent and haughty, for the arrival of their means of public transportation. At last it arrives, inhospitable, imperious, sparkling; and here he leaves again with his new load and gets lost along one of those streets that radiate from the great round and crowded square, towards a background of dark clouds...

Emilia is under another shed, larger than the previous one, with a long wall at the back and stone benches. At her feet she has her rickety suitcase. She has it next to her leg, like a dog that does not lose sight of what has been entrusted to it for a single moment. Around her, the people who also wait for her with her suitcases are more like her than the others. They are, like her, peasants who come and go from Milan to their villages in Lower Lombardy. The vehicle that finally appears is a large and old car, almost disused. It arrives after an endless wait and after another endless wait, when it has long been full of all those people, it leaves in almost religious silence.

The car stops in the little square, at the edge of a village. The little square is white, desolate. In one corner is a deli; in front, a stained glass window full of coffins; In the middle, a cafe with neon signs, sparkling windows and, inside, the old, exhausted, cold peasant misery. A line of people comes out from the front door of the car: old peasants with pig-like necks, women dressed in dark clothes, some students, a soldier and finally, with her suitcase that makes her walk bent, Emilia.

His traveling companions disperse in the silence of the village, along narrow and long streets, but carefully paved and with the plastering of the houses from a century ago recently painted, with light and cold colors.

Emilia also gets lost in one of those streets where there is only a child wrapped in non-poor clothes, like in fables, and a dog. In the background

you can see the field, a tremulous and transparent scene of poplars whose first greenery has the uncertainty of the color of the earth and with curly and sparse shoots like dry leaves. A wonderful veil of fog makes those rows of distant poplars a setting too refined for a sacred solitude because it is peasant.

The landscape is the same as what Pablo and the guest crossed in the car, a short time before, until they reached the Po. Or if the reader prefers, it is the same one that Renzo crossed on foot to meet Adda, according to the story in Manzoni's most poetic pages.

But there is something unnatural in the immense number of poplars that frame the meadows and the sky, before, behind, to the left, to the right; cornices of trees as large as parade grounds or as oriental spaces, or as narrow and measured as floors of cathedrals, and which translude each other, to infinity: a crooked row superimposes another right one; a right row to a parallel row, and this to a perpendicular row. And since the terrain is undulating, this superimposition, this transparency of rows of poplars has no end: it is an immense amphitheater, as in the engravings of ancient battles and, in the unnatural and profound peace (an unnaturalness and depth that certainly cannot be due to the work of nature - which works there, passive and powerful as at the bottom of the sea - nor to the pulp industry) appear, here and there, like little piles of precious things, the severe bell towers and at their side the confusion of its dome, of a reddish brown, almost rust, with blood-colored stains (the 16th and 17th centuries of severe places, now stagnant, awaiting their end).

Emilia now crosses that countryside, along a long, narrow road, carefully paved. She walks for a long time, dragging her suitcase, stopping from time to time and patiently changing hands with her load: alone, in all that vastness of poplars, of humidity, of sky, of advertising signs. She finally reaches a crossroads: from the paved road, another dark dirt path deviates, with a long spine of grass (ancient cart track). Emilia turns and, quickening her pace, heads towards a farmhouse, pink as a barracks, outlined against the melancholic green of the poplars.

There is no one in the central courtyard of the farmhouse. It is flooded by a veiled sun that does not leave a thread of shadow in any corner. Around there are long, low buildings, with red roofs; On one side, a shed, with the stables (silent) in the shadow of the round towers of two silos,

severe as those bell towers that can be seen in the distance, beyond the infinite rows of poplars. On the other side, a house, with all the shutters closed: only the gray glass door is half open, but covered with a sad and immaculate curtain. In front there is a hut, perhaps another stable, and a pile of red bricks, among blood-red harnesses that seem abandoned there, forever, to rust. And between one construction and another (fantastic and detailed, like princely barracks from the 18th century), the slight perspectives of the poplars through the mist, over complicated undulations of embankments, of ropes to pull rafts, perhaps due to the presence of a river.

On a pile of sand, in the middle of the patio, where the remains of a cement platform remain, two children play, wrapped in their poor but clean clothes, like in the illustrations in the stories. Their faces are red and expressionless, already adult and judicious, like those of their peasant parents. They look with curiosity without surprise, perhaps out of shyness and good manners learned at home or in neighboring schools, at Emilia who arrives and silently enters that large patio.

She, in turn, looks at them without speaking.

All the way she has advanced dragging her suitcase as if driven by the obsessive determination of a kidnapper, of an infanticide. Now she is there, motionless, in front of the patio of her old house, which her silence and her fear make even more sacred. A dog approaches her and sniffs her.

Emilia takes a few steps towards the center of the patio - while she can already see that the white open curtain is raised at the door and a worried and hostile face approaches the glass -, forgetting for the first time to take the suitcase, abandoned in her hand, in her hand. earth, swollen, alone and useless.

In the background, beyond the pile of red bricks and harnesses, there is an old bench, sunburnt, rain-rotted, that has been there for God knows how long since Emilia's childhood. Recognizing him, Emilia approaches him with once again obsessed, obstinate steps, and sits down. And she remains motionless, under the strange light of the sun.

The house is silent and deserted. For the rest, it is always like this: because it is very large, because there are few people who live there and because Lucía has been careful to teach the servants to remain silent and apart. However, in the silence and emptiness of these moments, there is something special. As if the house were really uninhabited.

The guest seems to have taken with him not only the lives of those who inhabit that place, but also to have divided them among themselves, leaving each one alone with the pain of loss and with a no less painful sense of waiting.

Odetta seems to be, therefore, totally alone in the house. She runs through it in both directions, as if searching for something in the void. But both the interior and the garden have the air of sleeping in a definitive and isolated silence.

Odetta's face, during these vain explorations, remains indecipherable. Even more: a kind of humor (a sly and... sly smile in the depths of her eyes) distorts her features, makes them ambiguous.

She goes to the back of the garden, reaches the place where she and her family, peering over the low fence, covered with climbing plants, had last seen the guest, as he walked away and disappeared. Odetta contemplates the perspective of the empty road.

It is not known what he is looking for in that void. That emptiness is sadder, more offensive, more normal than ever. Cement, expensive materials, gloomy art nouveau cornices, absurd and exhausted conifers line that long perspective without a single hint of hope and reality.

Odetta looks ironically.

Then he stands on tiptoe and with an artificial, grotesque step (a long cat-in-boots stride) returns to the house. She almost runs the last stretch. But when he reaches the center of the living room, he stops abruptly. And he looks around him, pressing his lips together (always grotesquely), almost emitting a kind of song between his closed and stretched lips. Thus he remains motionless, for a long time. Then he moves again.

Now he goes to his father's room. But she only pauses for a moment on him. An instant, the time to count, although somewhat slowly, up to three: one, the place where his father was lying; two, the place where she sat; three, the place occupied by her guest. After that withering look, Odetta

flees, literally flees towards the garden, but towards the part where her father used to sit, in the large wicker chair, during his convalescence.

Here Odetta's exam is really long and complicated. Observe the place where her father lay, the place where her guest sat, the place where she sat.

In the grass (which has become almost wild, as in the mists of time) there are no traces of those "ancient" naps, of those deeply enjoyed afternoons, during which a life was reborn and a love was born. But in Odetta it is evident that the memories are vivid and precise.

She goes to the place where her father rested and, trying to be exact, measures the distance in steps from the point where the guest sat and from the point where she herself sat.

Then she measures, always in the same way, the distance between the point where she was sitting and the point where the guest was sitting. But she is not satisfied (she makes ridiculous skeptical faces with her mouth and even wrinkles her nose). So she runs back to the house and reaches the kitchen.

There is the new maid who, by a certainly unusual coincidence, is called Emilia, like the previous one. She is a girl no longer so young, short, with a pale, worn-out face, and large pitiful eyes. Odetta asks for a meter and the new maid, silent, diligent, gives it to her.

With that meter in her hand, triumphant, Odetta goes down to the garden once again. There she resumes her measurements with millimetric accuracy: she barely breaks off to make quick calculations, after a moment of hesitation and always with a hint of humor from her. And she even chuckles, to herself.

3

IN THE HOME

In the background, above the rows of poplars, a reddish moon rises. It doesn't even look like a moon, but rather a bloody piece of a large, soft body.

Its light projects a glow of unsustainable sweetness onto the patio of the farmhouse - in which a pearly lamp shines. All around are the pink and old buildings: in the darkness their rusticity disappears, and the silhouette of the two silos, the stables, the red brick walls, is almost solemn.

In the middle of this kind of ruined, silent scenery, Emilia remains sitting on the bench, with the same attitude she acquired at the beginning. Her suitcase is no longer in the middle of the patio. A little light filters through the glass door of the peasant house; the bleach-bleached curtains are drawn. Beyond the glass you can see the faces of the house's inhabitants, who look: towards Emilia, of course. They are an old man, an old woman in a black scarf, a young wife, a man who is still young, but fat and too red, and, on the edge of the glass, below, the faces - also red and round - of the two children, diligent and expressionless. They are gray or barely pink shadows under the whiteness of the curtains. They do not reach the moonlight that illuminates the patio, with its cracked cement, its piles of sand, its red bricks, like a tiny lake or like the beautiful ruins of an old church.

4

WHERE IT IS DESCRIBED HOW ODETTA YOU END UP LOSING OR BETRAYING BYE

Now Odetta is leaning over a large chest (in her little room, in which she has known love for the first time in the body of the young guest). With that new distant and somewhat ironic patience with which she acts in these moments of her life, Odetta completely empties the chest.

It is no small task: that chest contains her entire childhood, represented by an infinite number of relics, some easily recognizable, others only recognizable to her, Odetta, and without meaning, value or even form for anyone else.

The chest is slowly emptied, until at the bottom, precisely at the bottom - that is, buried - the album of photographs appears. Odetta takes it almost with that abruptness with which the usual gestures are made, already devoid of charm. She starts flipping through it.

Soon he reaches the pages where the small photographs of the father and the guest are pasted: faded photographs, out of focus, as if they were much older than they really are. Odetta looks at them one by one, for a long time. There are a dozen of them.

In one of them, the guest has stopped reading the book he was engrossed in, raised his head and smiled. In that position, with an

unconscious youthful and masculine gesture, he has lengthened his legs: and the beauty of his body is shown in all his violence. Odetta runs her thin index finger over that body, as if to recognize it and caress it at the same time. It is a meticulous, but uncertain and childish gesture, which clumsily follows the design of the photographed figure until it touches the lap. And at that moment, suddenly, Odetta closes her hand and clenches her fist.

He gets up, throws himself on the bed, presses his face against the pillow. It is not clear if she cries or does it as a joke. But when she turns, after a long time, with her face up, and remains rigidly stretched out on the bed, her expression has completely changed: she no longer makes faces, smiles, mocks, winks; There is no longer the slightest ploy to distract or defend oneself. She has become expressionless, immobile, absorbed: she looks at the void, above, and the only thing that has not abandoned her to total atony is a kind of stupor.

The darkness that invades the room seems to have almost a conscious meaning: the passage of time, which continues its useless fatality (the night is made for duties that cannot be postponed, and those who fail to do so feel the pain of a freedom that seems atrocious). Darkness is an admonition: an admonition that approves of parents and the parents of parents, the preachers of normality and duty. And indeed, you hear a bell, although very far away, and voices closer (perhaps mixed with indefinable music, the accent of family life, at the end of a day's work); Signs of life are also heard inside the house.

But Odetta seems impervious to everything: to the tragic warning of darkness, to the consolations that darkness itself suggests, to unfulfilled duties, and to the terrible freedom of nothingness with which she has replaced her daily life.

She remains motionless, lying on her bed, face up, with her neck tense.

This is how the new Emilia finds her when she appears to announce dinner and turns on the light. A truly inopportune and absurd light, because she discovers a reality that is not only more bearable, but also more real when darkness protects her.

The new Emilia, worried - with her big, already frightened eyes - shakes Odetta slightly and then, as far as respect allows, a little harder. But Odetta neither sees nor feels her. When touching her arms to convince her - poor

new Emilia - to go to dinner, she notices that she is tightly clenching one fist, the fist of her right hand.

Although this may seem illogical now, the entire family is around Odetta's bedside. It's daytime, and the light triumphantly enters through the French door. However, each one is alone, fulfilling his family duty. There is also the old family doctor - who is really the protagonist -: as soon as his visit is over, he looks at that poor lying body and picks up his instruments, skeptical and desolate.

At the end of the arm stretched out and pressed to the body, Odetta's fist...

There are no more changes in Odetta's life: she has established herself, fixed forever in that absurd and desperate attitude. She is there, in her bed, motionless, face up, with expressionless eyes, with just a little bit of fear: fixed on the void. And his fist clenched against her body.

But here the new Emilia enters the room (now empty) scared, opening the door with the delicacy of poor peasants - because she is also a peasant - who always feel guilty and are always afraid of disturbing. She enters with her eyes lost in fear, because if this time the culprit was really her, her guilt would be tremendous.

She looks towards the bed where her mistress is lying, then looks outside, towards the corridor, then again towards the bed, where that body lying, absorbed in itself, does not even notice her. From her mouth comes a naive and eager call: "Miss!", as if to warn her of a new danger or a new pain. But his voice breaks in his throat and his eyes widen, bright with terrified love.

Finally he steps aside. Two men enter (who, in that house, seem of a different nature, with the hard, solid features of a different race) dressed in white, carrying stretchers.

With delicacy that is only indifferent skill, they take Odetta's fragile body (as if it were a thing) and place it on the white stretchers. Thus, as quickly as they have arrived, they leave.

Outside, at the end of the garden, another one is waiting for them, sitting at the wheel of the ambulance, which immediately starts up. The litters, with their contents, are introduced into the vehicle that leaves white and silent.

He heads quickly and disappears, down the same street where one day the guest got lost: the street always the same, in a silent and sad hour in which nothing happens.

Now they carry Odetta on a stretcher down the white corridor of a clinic: a modern, expensive, cozy clinic.

Along the corridor there are fleeting glimpses of interiors invaded by midday light and peace. A white bed, with a white face. A white armchair, with a man in pajamas, sitting. The gesture with which a nurse restrains a patient who wants to get up, fidgeting and searching for something. A face, long and grim, that he stalks from the headboard, following the passage of the stretcher with the corner of his eye.

Odetta's room is at the end of the corridor: it's the room where Odetta wanted to go to, God knows why.

Immaculate, shining, luminous, like every work due to a bad conscience. Because there is no doubt that this dropping out of Odetta has the approval of all of Milan: there is a tacit agreement between her and the power (whatever it may be) that builds clinics: a very expensive clinic, in the case of Odetta, well among the different ones there are different ones.

What has driven Odetta to this renunciation? Her desire to close an alliance pact with her own persecutors? Her desire to help those who want to exclude her from it by excluding themselves from it of their own free will, with all that sweetness, urgency and, one would say, with all that cunning animal docility? Why has she agreed to quell the scandal that she herself has caused with the same dark diligence with which she has always lived?

But it is useless to expect that, now or in the future, Odetta will want to answer questions like these: she demonstrates ignorance even of those who transfer her from the stretcher to the bed.

His only, deliberate design - which, of course, goes unnoticed - is to keep his fist tightly closed and pressed against his body.

Next to the bed there is a large window through which a tender and yet perverse light enters.

From that window you can enjoy a view extraordinarily equal to that from the garden of Odetta's house. You can only see the right side of that street, against the void: because obviously the street is on a slight slope and everything ends, thus, with the sky (an everyday sky, perhaps gray, perhaps

light blue, undoubtedly faded). This emptiness projects a deep sadness onto the street, as if something that should be joyful was missing: for example, a beach with a smiling and peaceful southern sea, suitable for a long and happy vacation. But this is not what counts, nor is the reality of those houses: luxury constructions around a luxury clinic. Nor the jealously guarded privacy of those families of Milanese professionals or industrialists who keep their blinds closed (only a maid dares, from time to time, to peek out for a moment, only to immediately disappear in the impenetrable shadow of the interior).

None of this counts (although it has a meaning, however enigmatic, and a story, however sad).

What counts is what is, what is, what appears. The appearance is mysteriously geometric, although irregular. Each point is an exact distance from another point. This distance must be measured; and the work is long, because the points are infinite. For example, the windows are one hundred and fifty (with the blinds closed or semi-closed); Forty of them have a balcony. A red carpet swings in a window. There are seventy-five tips of the trees, almost all conifers, that peek out of the gardens on each ground floor. The angles of the houses, thirty; the walls, twenty; Three of these walls are made of brick, of a tender hazelnut color; six are gray, marble or imitation marble; another six, pink, distant and, therefore, barely decipherable; four, of a color between lilac and pink, livid, against which the dark and genetic greens of the pines stand out more sadly. The public lighting lanterns - with arched tips, almost coquettishly, as in a moon-park -, with their opaque tube for neon light, are six: and they disappear, becoming smaller in the perspective of the street of the clinic. Maybe there is a church at the end of that street, because suddenly you hear the gloomy bells ringing with the false joy of the carillons.

Odetta's eyes look at all that emptiness filled by the appearance of that architecture, of those sounds. The fist, against her body, remains stubbornly closed.

5

PUSTULES

**Another period has passed. Maybe days,
months and even years.**

Emilia continues sitting on her bench against the pink wall, filled with her madness up to her eyes, down to the roots of her hair.

Meanwhile, something has happened in the peasant house, martial and calm like an abandoned parade ground: the people have not only become accustomed to Emilia's strange presence, but the deferential and devout idea they have had of her has matured. his arrival.

In fact (since those who are superstitious are always realistic, in their superstition), next to Emilia, on one of the blood-colored bricks in the pile, a candle shines, as if before a sacred image. A humble, provisional candle, if you will, without any solemnity. Put there only to give a name and meaning to the event. The old women of the house have also gained confidence in the new Emilia; They no longer lurk, suspicious, from the white curtains. They are in the patio: and one watches over Emilia, another works, and they all have a peculiar confidence with the phenomenon that occurs in the house, with that Emilia mute, absorbed and as if burned by fever.

It also seems commonplace that from the open gate at the back of the peasant house, along the white path against the green of the meadows and poplars, a group of old men and women advance, as if it were a procession of pilgrims. Evidently, they are neighbors, or people from any nearby village whose bell tower rises with its long brown dome streaked with red (and the sumptuous and sordid ornaments of the Counter-Reformation centuries) at the end of the rows of poplars.

The newcomers advance in that kind of procession until they stop, in a circle, around Emilia. Among them - now she is noticed, because the others make room for her - there is a middle-aged woman, who looks old (in the black party clothes, the silk stockings, the open mantilla) and she is carrying a sick child in her arms. , with his suffering and humiliated face covered with small red sores or dry pustules.

Emilia doesn't seem to see anything. And if her eyes finally rest on the sick person, they do so as if she did not really exist, as if she were just an apparition. However, she looks at him long, diligently, as if he were fulfilling a duty that was more bureaucratic than sacred. Her participation in the ceremony in which she herself is the saint occurs through the same procedures through which others accept her: almost as something codified, belonging to the acts of a blind and immobile holiness. Finally, absently,

almost reluctantly, Emilia makes a slow sign of the cross towards the wounded child.

All the peasants' eyes are fixed on the child, eagerly awaiting what ends up happening: the child begins to wave his arms and legs, crying, looking at his mother; He struggles, tries to free himself from her embrace to place his feet on the ground, sliding along his body. The mother, trembling, with her face already filled with a consecrated divine joy, releases him and bends down to look at him. The child places his feet on the ground, stands up, almost without hesitation. His face is tender, sweet, as if recently washed: not the slightest trace of the pustules that disfigured him remains. Then everyone falls to their knees, uttering loud cries of gratitude and joy.

6

PETER'S COROLLARY

Pedro is alone in his room. He is sitting on the bed where the guest was sleeping and has on his knees the large illustrated volume of contemporary painting, the same one that the two boys once contemplated together.

He folds the pages with tension, almost greedily, looking for something that really interests him, but that he cannot find, dazzled by his own urgency. It is a reproduction of Lewis's painting. He finds her and begins to observe her full of dark good will, as if he wanted to question her, or as if deciphering her were the solution of an oracle.

But what can answer that poor reproduction of an Imagist painting from 1914?

On the contrary, the painting seems to have lost all that revealing charm, all that significant tension, splendidly loaded with meaning that had fascinated and almost moved Pedro when he saw it for the first time, together with the guest.

Those colored surfaces (and splendidly worn, as if the material on which they have been painted were a sublime material due to its very poverty: the poverty of cardboard or cheap paper, which quickly yellows); those precise contours, made with the sole purpose of "decomposing" reality according to a technique between cubist and futurist (but in reality, neither cubist nor futurist at all), belonging, in short, to a kind of culture of "decomposition" -but in truth, pure and orderly, like that of the ancient craftsmen, and remember to what extent the avant-gardes of the beginning

of the century were severe-: all this seems diminished, debased, disappointing, impoverished.

It is nothing more than a beautiful, elegant, miserable object: a meager useless enigma, since the meaning to which it referred is a historical meaning, which no longer seems to have value and, consequently, subsists as a relic without points of reference.

However, Pedro focuses on it as if searching for the meaning - not only historical - to which all those rigorous and precise signs refer; but he also seeks the meaning that the painting had acquired for him, and thanks to which it manifested itself as a revelation, only a few weeks or months before.

7

ORTIGAS

The bells of all the villages in Lower Lombardy ring at noon. The silence of the poplars becomes festive, as is natural: a keenly familiar sensation animates things that, therefore, signify peace, regularity, the reassuring validity of ancient habits.

Also in the farm, where Emilia remains seated, motionless, on her bench, the chimes of noon introduce that atmosphere of peaceful joy. People rest and eat in the farmhouse

The door with the open curtains opens and the old women of the house come out as if to perform a kind of ritual, faithfully followed by the two children with adult faces. They bring Emilia's lunch.

It is a good lunch, arranged on a tray, perhaps made of plastic, with decorations of large flowers, unlike the lunches that are brought to men in the fields, wrapped in knotted napkins. There's chicken, sausage, sautéed radicchio, and a plate of fresh tomatoes.

Proud of that meal, with a determined but not hasty step, the women of the house bring lunch to their saint: and the children, ruddy and inert, follow with their daily interest that operation where the sacred and the familiar are so sweetly mixed.

But this time, an unexpected disappointment awaits adults and children.

Emilia frowns at the food offered to her on the elegant tray and doesn't even blink, she doesn't even move a muscle.

Then, as if they were a deaf-mute, the women make big signs, as if to say: "Look, look how many plates are full, cheer up, eat, come on, eat." But it's useless. Emilia takes her eyes off the food and stares into space. The women begin to worry, overwhelmed by great grief. Especially the oldest, poor thing, with her teary eyes as a child, she insists more than the others. Precisely she - who should know very well, at her age, to what extent nothing is necessary in the world, to what extent life is not a duty - strives to convince Emilia to eat, to at least try something, so as not to be consumed. She uses the same arguments with which she forces herself to eat, to survive, in the name of resignation and the rights of life, who has seen someone she loves die and mourns him.

But Emilia does not let herself be convinced, like some neighbor in a house of mourning would let herself be convinced, ready to immediately understand that resignation and those rights of life. No, Emilia doesn't understand anything. What will happen to that stubborn saint's head?

And as the women, with the old woman at the head - before the lost eyes of the boy and the girl - continue to insist ardently, Emilia, with her perverse eyes, full of a strength born of pain, looks at her relatives, a after another: finally, slowly raising one arm, he indicates something next to the pile of rubble and red bricks. It's a bush of nettles.

8

NETTES AGAIN

The two children (there are only two, while the old people are at least a dozen: the only man still quite young is the burly father) are in the meadow, in front of the house, dedicated to a task that seems, more than ever, typical of children in stories.

They collect nettles.

With their neat peasant clothes, almost resembling the bourgeois, they collect the nettles in silence, with diligence. Only the girl complains from time to time because the nettles sting her.

The boy has the pot in his hands. It's almost full now. They both bend over the grass, so washed by the recent rains that it looks like storybook grass. All around, almost vertiginous in their greenery, stretch the meadows, surrounded by the regular lines of the poplars, which shine through one another.

In the midst of all that greenery - vibrant, as in the south, or in the center of Africa, and at the same time pale, of perfect purity - the pink of the farm shines with greater splendor, with its strange, archaic, extravagant shapes. for its very functionality (like a barracks, with its sentry boxes, its astronomical observatories, its abandoned bastions and its purely ornamental towers).

As soon as the pot has been filled, the two children, comical and judicious, return to the farm yard, through the large round gate.

There, in the background, against her old peeling, red, pink wall, Emilia remains motionless on the bench, in her black clothes.

The two children head towards her. They stop at the proper distance and with the gestures of custom - it is evident that they have been in charge of this task for a long time - they place the pot full of nettles on the ground, light the fire in a kind of tiny hearth made with some old bricks. from the pile of rubble, and already filled with the ashes of the previous periodic fires.

Sweet and familiar, the flames emerge and the nettles begin to cook in the pot. Shortly after they are ready, steaming.

Some old women of the house come out of habit - but disappointed, desolate - to attend the lunch, standing aside with a devout air.

Another group of old peasant women arrives, passing through the gate and murmuring the rosary. Thus, whispering, they frame the corner that the saint has chosen as the seat of her solitude.

The two children, disturbed by their shyness (they have in their hands a wooden spoon that has fallen from the woman's pocket), bring Emilia her green soup.

Emilia looks at them grimly, lost in the rigor of her holiness. But there is something strange, extraordinary in it: there is no doubt that it is a miraculous phenomenon. But it would be difficult to specify to what extent she has to do with a saint (in the case that Emilia is a saint)...

His exclusive and continuous diet of nettles has turned his hair green: his eyebrows, his eyelashes, his hair. Even the skin is slightly greenish, especially around the eyes.

But what impresses most is his head: his perm, already undone, with his hair fallen over his forehead and abundant, curly, tangled behind his ears, on whose lobes two golden points shine: the rings of the first communion.

The nettle green of that peasant maid's perm does not confer, by the way, the dignity due to that silence, to that haughty solitude of a saint. And in truth, the old women of the house look at her worried and filled with sighs: complicit with each other and united by that kind of misfortune, or rather fatality, against which they are powerless.

But Emilia, absorbed, with cloudy eyes that look at nothing, slowly eats the green food of her scandalous penance.

9

VOCATION AND TECHNIQUES

Pedro is leaning over some white sheets. Draw. He is so focused on his task (he draws a head that looks, awkwardly, like the guest's) that he forgets that he is alone and speaks out loud, judging what he does.

He is disgusted: the displeasure and disappointment that his drawings produce in him is like a spasm that disfigures his features and hoarsens his voice.

Finally he tears the paper on which he is drawing into pieces, makes a ball with it and throws it on the ground.

Pedro continues drawing; But he has had a larger table brought to his room, covered with sheets of charcoal.

But although he is now better organized, he does not seem happier with what he manages to do.

A new leaf begins, immaculate, as if obeying an almost joyful inspiration, in its childish ferocity. But later, as the drawing takes shape (it is always the guest's head), disgrace and anger replace hope and good will. He continues talking out loud to himself (with the hoarse, intemperate and complaining voice with which we speak, without dignity, when we are alone). He judges his mistakes with ruthless disdain, comments sardonically, and shouts "Shit!" He ends up insulting himself, calling himself an idiot, impotent, stupid.

Pedro continues bending over his drawings. But now in the garden, on a huge paper, made up of several sheets joined together, that would not fit in the room. And in truth, he takes up a good stretch of the garden.

He no longer draws with charcoal, but with a thick brush, leaning over that paper like a worker building a pavement.

But he continues to complain quietly, murmuring with anguish that this drawing does not resemble him, does not resemble him, will never resemble him, and if it does resemble him, it will be something repulsive and absurd, that he has found it in the void (thus, longingly, with a brush in hand) and will leave it in the same void. Poor new Emilia, who brings him a Coca-Cola, surprises him in the middle of a monologue. And, as a servant, she listens to those vehement predictions of her master about her own future: any way of appropriating destiny, becoming an author, an artist, a creator. But her reckless statements - directed at the reverent servant - are immediately followed by the dull ironies of doubt, the cold musings of anguish.

Drawing, painting... becoming an author: meanwhile, this is nothing more than showing off, taking the risk of getting in touch with a world that must learn everything from someone who shows up and learns it without taking it into account, as if it were predestined. , a guest from heaven: and thus he ignores his loneliness, he believes he is already made to live publicly, in a place where there is not - with justice, in this case - the slightest pity.

Furthermore, what humiliating tests must an artist go through... How mean this brush, these antics of contours, stains, sketches drawn on pieces of paper glued together! What poor instruments, what vile means he must use! How childish this technique, this inevitable practical and manual moment, this schoolboy bending over a sheet to make strokes and more strokes on it, with application, as if it were the first time, with the tongue out, the eyes excited and a shame! terrible that invades the entire body transformed into a machine!

Still bent over the leaves, Pedro tries new techniques trying to overcome the shame of normal techniques.

He has around him, in disorder, oil colors, watercolor, tempera, pastel; But what is most impressive is the presence of transparent materials: cellophane, thick or light, gauze and glass, especially glass.

While trying out these new techniques - alone in that garden, like a dog - Pedro does not lose the habit of talking, of judging, of complaining, of commenting to himself on what he does. And what he does continues to produce the same disgust. With a brush he traces the shape of a head (always the guest's head?); Then he sticks a piece of gauze on the cardboard

(the glue is yellowish, and he doesn't worry about the oil paint, which is still fresh, running) and with a brush dipped in turquoise blue he makes two spots in the place where the holes would presumably be. eyes. Then, always without taking care of possible runs, he places a large piece of glass on the cardboard and gauze: on it, with the brush dipped in a light sepia, he traces around the blue spots on the gauze (which are translucent under the glass) and within the black outline of the cardboard (which shows through under the glass and gauze) the circles of the eyes.

He laughs, he laughs. He laughs at the resulting mess, bitter, disgusted with himself, sincerely amused at his clumsiness, overwrought, and disappointed.

The pile of drawings and paintings inside Pedro's room is very large, which has returned to small dimensions and that is why it has returned to the interior. Inspired, maddened, enraptured, the boy is leaning, on his knees, over his material which, this time, is supported on a kind of lectern. And since that material is transparent, Pedro could be seen through the picture he paints. When he finishes painting the first glass, in silence, Pedro rests a second glass on it, so that the monochrome of the second becomes transparent on the first, monochrome painting.

During this operation, Peter's movements are mechanical and inspired; His voice, which tirelessly comments on them, has lost all color: low, barely perceptible, he punctually follows the movements.

New techniques must be invented that are unrecognizable, that do not resemble any previous operation, in order to avoid childishness and ridicule. You have to build your own world, with which there are no possible comparisons. For which there are no previous judgment measures. The measures must be new, like the technique. No one should understand that the author is worthless, that he is an abnormal, inferior being, that he is like a worm that wriggles to survive. No one should catch it in lack of naivety. Everything must be presented as perfect, based on unknown rules and, therefore, impossible to judge. Like crazy: yes, like crazy. Glass on glass, because Pedro is not capable of correcting, but no one should notice it. A line on a glass corrects, without dirtying it, another line previously painted on another glass. But everyone must believe that it is not the ploy of an incapable, impotent person, but a resolute, undaunted, haughty and almost ferocious decision: a barely invented and already irreplaceable

technique. Either cellophane or gauze glued on glass, and the whole transparent on a few strokes that, by chance, turned out well on the cardboard, after a thousand painful trials and a thousand other torn cardboards.

No one should know that a stroke turns out well by chance. By chance, with fear: and when a stroke, by miracle, turns out well, it must be protected and guarded as a relic. But no one, no one should notice it. The author is a poor shaky idiot. A waste. He lives in chance and risk, ashamed like a child. He has reduced his life to the absurd melancholy of someone who lives degraded by the impression of something lost forever.

Transformed in his appearance - pale, thin, with long hair and the first signs of beard on his hairless face, unpleasant and black on his upper lip -, Pedro leaves his house. He silently greets Lucía, his mother, and Pablo, his father. And he leaves. The new Emilia, with large moist and pitying eyes, makes a gesture to help him and take the briefcase from her. But Pedro precedes her, takes her briefcase and leaves without turning around.

He walks down the street, in front of his house, the street where the guest disappeared. He too disappears, advancing, insensitive, through that melancholic and hateful withdrawal.

Pedro is in front of a recently completed painting, in his new studio (no doubt in the center of the city). It is simply a surface painted blue (the same blue with which he used to paint the guest's eyes). It is the blue of the memory of him. But blue, by itself, is not enough. The blue is only one part. Who can give Pedro the right to do such mutilation? What ideologies, he asks, can justify it? Weren't the first, miserable attempts at similar portraits better? Ah! The truth is this: both surfaces made solely of blue and realistic portraits are nothing but useless and absurd pretexts. And he does not paint nor has he ever painted to express himself, but perhaps just so that everyone knows his helplessness.

Carried away by an impulse of ferocious hatred - and at the same time with the somewhat vulgar calm of someone who has made a calculation - he stands up in front of the painting over which he was leaning, unbuttons his fly and urinates on it.

YOUTHS...

Yes, indeed, what do smart young people do
of wealthy families,
If not talk about literature and painting?
Maybe with friends of lower extraction,
somewhat rough, but also more tormented
for ambition? What do they do, if not talk about
literature and painting,
disheveled, subversive, ready to make him jump
all in the air,
already starting to warm up with their young butts
the cafe chairs already warmed by the butts of the
airtight?
Or walking (that is, stepping on the divine slabs
from the old part of the city, like soldiers or
like whores),
rebels sick of bourgeois snobbery,
despite all his sincerity, his idealisms,
of his vocation for action: painful shadow
of Esenin, or of Simone Weil, in the soul.
Let's think about it: come on, sweaty,
of apartments with sad blankets
burned by the iron or with cabinets
which have cost the father a few thousand lire,
secretly loved;
They already come from surrounded houses
by the aura of wealth, with habits almost
heavenly,
with servants, suppliers... all the young people
literati
They are bathed in sweat, they have a pallor of
seniors,
If not old, their graces are already peeling,
They have an irresistible vocation for meals
heavy

and woolen clothes, are prone to diseases
stinking - from the teeth or intestines -,
They are dry-bellied: in short, small
bourgeois,
like brother magistrates or uncles
traders.

A single, large family deprived of all love.
From time to time, it happens in this family
an Adorable. But, strange thing,
He too, like the rest, the dirty ones,
invokes (from the beginning of another century and,
after a brief interruption between 45 and 55,
to this day) to an exterminating God:
self exterminator
and their social class. I also invoke him!
And this invocation has already been heard once.
Languid youngsters in Sioux shawls, pretending
young people of Turin
already half bald, with blue coats, destroyers
of grammars,
fervent Castroites who skip meals in
Monza,
new worshipers of "homo qualunque"
covered with furs, who love
the Brandenburg Concerts as if they had
discovered a formula
anti-bourgeoisism that makes them throw around
furious glances,
sweetly grim democrats, persuaded
that only
true democracy can destroy false democracy;
anarchists
little blondes that confuse with perfect good faith
the dynamite with its good sperm (and they walk
with big guitars through the streets
false like backstage, in grungy groups);

schoolboys
university students occupying the Aula Magna
claiming Power, instead of renouncing it
Once for all;
guerrillas with their guerrillas on the flank
who have decided that black people are like
blancos
(but maybe not that white people are like
blacks): all these
They do not prepare anything other than the arrival
of a new Exterminating God,
marked, innocently, with a swastika:
However, they will be the first to enter,
with real illnesses and real
rags on the body,
in a gas chamber: isn't this just what
what do they want?
Don't you want destruction, the most horrendous
destruction,
of themselves and the social class to which
belong?
Me, with my small penis, all skin and hair, but
capable of fulfilling his duty, although
humiliated,
forever, for a centaur penis, heavy
and divine,
immense and proportionate, tender and powerful;
I, wanderer in the recesses of moralism
and sentimentality,
fighting against both, seeking their alienation
(an alienated morality, an alienated feeling
instead of the real ones: with inspirations
stimulated
and therefore much more maternal than
authentic,
destined for ridicule, as is the bourgeois rule);

I find myself, then, inside a mechanism
which has always worked the same way.
The bourgeoisie is lucid, it loves reason:
However, because of his black conscience,
maneuver to punish and destroy oneself:
entrust, thus,
its Destruction to emissaries
who are precisely their degenerate children: the
which
stupidly keep
a useless bourgeois dignity of a man of letters
independent,
or aggressively reactionary and servile, or that
They sink to the bottom and are lost, and in each
case
They obey that dark mandate.
And they begin to invoke the aforementioned God.
Hitler arrives, and the bourgeoisie is happy.
He dies in torture, by his own hand.
He is punished, by the hand of his own Hero, because
of his own faults.
What are the young people talking about in 1968 – with the
manes
barbarians and Edwardian jackets, style
vaguely military, and covering members
unhappy like mine?
What do they talk about, if not literature and painting?
And that
What does it mean, but to invoke from the bottom
darkest of the petite bourgeoisie to God
exterminator, to hurt her once more
with blows even greater than those dealt in 1938.
Only we, the bourgeois, know how to unite
to the populace,
and the young extremists, abandoning Marx and
dressing

At the Flea Market, they don't do anything else
what to howl
like generals and engineers against generals and
engineers.
It is an internal struggle.
Whoever really died of consumption,
dressed as a muzhik, before even turning
sixteen years,
He would be the only one, perhaps, who would be right.
The others murder each other.

11

WHERE IT IS DESCRIBED HOW THE LORD PETER YOU END UP LOST THE BETRAY GOD

Pedro is in the middle of his large room, with his eyes closed: but he closes them furiously, and his face is full of wrinkles and his mouth is half open, in a grimace of rage.

Thus, with his eyes closed, he moves in the milky light of his rich rebel painter's workshop. Groping, feeling things, he goes towards a wall, where some blank canvases are leaning, he takes one, then another: he chooses one whose dimensions seem fair to him for the operation he proposes.

**Bring the swinging cloth to the middle of the
workshop and deposits it on the ground.
Afterwards, always blind, more and more
stubbornly blind, goes to another
workshop angle. The task is now
much more complicated, and two or three times
is about to fall: choose the
colors. Her hand touches watercolors, oils,
varnishes; finally reaches the area that
look for: a lot of packaging. The
mix, like the cards or the**

**dice, to help chance, and then
choose one. Is closed. Has to
open it. How a drunk goes
towards a table; but she has lost the
orientation and has a hard time finding it. To the
finally finds her. But now you must
find a drawer and inside it a
device to open the container. Here there is
a chisel With it he drills, clumsily,
the packaging.**

Now it's about returning to the abandoned painting in the middle of the workshop, on the floor. First Pedro looks for it with the tips of his feet, exploring, step by step, the space that surrounds him. Then he bends down and walks almost crawling on the ground, on all fours, but with difficulty, because he must have the container in one hand. Finally he collides with the cloth lying on the ground. Feeling it with his hand, he looks for the center. He suspends the can at the height of the center and then, very slowly, stands up, trying not to move the container away from the chosen axis. When he is standing, with a quick gesture he tilts the container and drops a little of its liquid, at random, in the center of the painting. The stain - blue - spreads, splashing tiny drops around it. Then Pedro leaves the container on the ground and takes the cloth painted like this. Always swinging like a drunk and not caring that the liquid drips, he looks for a free wall, with a nail, nailed by the way with premeditation: the painting hangs on it. But he still doesn't open his eyes to look at it; He returns, always with his eyes closed and with his face almost relaxed and swollen by a smile of intimate and fierce satisfaction, to the center of his empty room...

12

LUCÍA COROLLARY

Lucía finishes combing her hair and painting herself in front of the mirror that witnesses her daily ritual. But there is no doubt that she is far from there. Although she has combed her hair with due calm and care (like some very rich ladies and certain nobles, she wears her hair in an old-fashioned arrangement, with waves that fall almost covering her eyes: a

somewhat childish and affected refinement, which at the same time makes her give a certain air of a whore), when finished she painfully throws the comb on the table, among the precious objects on the dressing table.

She wakes up full of that pain. She then sighs and almost with an irony (absurd, in that face of a popular heroine) that illusorily distends her features, she puts on her coat, or a fur, and leaves her.

On the street, in front of the house, her car is waiting for her; She climbs onto it with that calmness mixed with frenzy, she sets it in motion, it leaves.

She too gets lost along the silent street where the guest has gotten lost; She too disappears in that arrogant and desolate setting of rich houses whose inhabitants have a duty not to show signs of life.

The stage remains alone: an index of an unreality that, specifically, has the form of a neighborhood of the dead whose stones, whose cement, whose plants are a spectacle, motionless in the sun, which anguishes and offends with its mere presence.

The world through which a lady's car can pass when her goals are no longer those planned and fixed by an intransgredible habit, but those that, trusting to chance, sin points out to her, is the most prosaic, sad and everyday world. , despite the violent change of the situation.

Lucía explores the city, then, excited, desperate, in search of something that, without a doubt, she will finally manage to find, but that for a long time, perhaps all day, seems like an impossible miracle.

She is guilty (she has gone out in search of a miracle, while everyone is given over to the charming miseries of every day): but her guilt is the result of a right that she believes she has.

Therefore, almost arrogant (to the extent that the sweetness of her Lombard girl's face, educated in piety, respect and innocent hypocrisy, allows it), she represses all anxiety, all shame, all voice of good sense: she dedicates herself searching for it with the obstinacy of a scientist or a hungry animal, writhing in silence.

What part of the city is this? From the great industrial city where duty and work are like a climate that prevents miracles from flourishing? Is Lucia in the suburb that faces Lower Lombardy or Switzerland? Towards Cremona or towards Venice? In the area of some industrial neighborhood, with its factories, silent as churches or schools, during work hours?

Since this is the moment in which the miracle occurs, the place is semi-deserted, quiet, with few passers-by, and a radiant sun of good omen, although weak. The shelter stands empty on the sidewalk; Under that shelter is the boy with light eyes. He waits for the tram from him, without anxiety, with dignity; Solitude, instead of causing attitudes of laziness or abandonment, encloses you in a kind of more compact and gentle grace.

He is tall, with pronounced, moving cheekbones, the abundant and thick hair of a simple boy, which he does not comb, his skin dark, his body elongated, although it does not seem that way because of his fair proportions, which give his youth a robust and virile air (not of an athlete, but rather of a peasant).

Lucía stops the car a little beyond the shelter; but an unexpected shyness immobilizes her, to the point that she does not have the courage to turn to the boy; Little by little she takes a cigarette, with her eyes fixed on the void, and she murmurs to herself the bitter thoughts that upset her and give her that desperate calm, and almost the decision to give up...

She remains motionless, bent over, with the unlit cigarette between her lips and a cold, bitter smile. She mechanically restarts the car, but she doesn't start.

As she turns her head (almost by chance!) towards the sidewalk, she sees the boy next to her. Maybe he is a student; Of course, he is not a worker. Maybe a university student, one of those from a poor family, who comes from the province. Otherwise, how would he have had the courage to approach a woman like her, so beautiful, so haughty, so protected by her obvious social privilege; How could she have even smiled at him with shy and intelligent complicity?

Lucía does not need to ask him for a light - that damned question that did not come to her lips -; She just barely smiles at him, making a shy gesture that indicates her unlit cigarette and her consequent need...

But the boy - always with that smile that now has a decidedly humorous air and that no longer leaves any doubt about his social background and his culture, at least as a university student - opens his arms with comic and sympathetic desolation, implying that he does not smoke.

But then he allows himself a gesture of true audacity (the audacity of healthy shy people, who perhaps are timid only because of the humility of their life): he begins a naive race, like a happy dog, approaches a passer-by,

asks for matches, returns , lights Lucía's cigarette, returns the matches to the passer-by and returns... Yes, that must be it: a student who comes from a petit-bourgeois or working-class family, from the province. He carries within him, but with grace, the inevitable humility, the rudeness of his origin: the signs of poverty.

Without knowing how or why, with a gesture of complicit camaraderie and an absolutely unconscious lack of prejudice, he leans over and opens the door; The boy gets into the car quickly, happy, accepting the adventure as something fair, genuinely capable of giving happiness.

The house where the boy lives is one of those where students who come from the province to the university are at risk of moving in. It is a house neither old nor new, but very sad, lost in the middle of a pile of houses neither old nor new, sandwiched between a group of brand new houses, resplendent with glass and metal - a recent and triumphant work of neo-capitalism - and another group - divine - of old houses from the last century, with the magnificent proportions of their gray walls, their cornices, their porches, their old garages, beautiful as churches. This entire neighborhood is almost in the countryside, beyond a crossroads that remains suspended in the distance, like a whitish apparition on the gray fog, and almost between the great, infinite rows of poplars, which begin from a canal with old stone parapets.

The car is left in a row of other cars, next to the broken sidewalk of the sad houses neither old nor new. Lucía and the boy enter one of those unfortunate little gates.

The staircase is semi-dark; It is impossible not to look, and it is impossible not to feel a sharp pain when looking.

The boy goes up impatiently; There is no doubt that, if it had been up to him, he would have jumped four steps at a time and in an instant he would have been at the end of that painful staircase, sinking upwards, stinking of vegetables and damp rags.

They arrive at the door of the apartment, God willing.

In the room there is a bunk bed (made with care); The two of them, without looking around, lie down, almost throw themselves down, trying to sink into their inexhaustible anxiety. They remain like that for a long time, until the boy stands up suddenly, as if frightened for some unforeseen reason (to the point that Lucía is really scared) and takes off his jacket.

Then he leans in to kiss her, but straightens up immediately, also suddenly, to take off her shirt (a more complicated task, which therefore requires a lot of intimidated smiling). He once again leans in to kiss her, then straightens up, now to furiously remove his shirt from her and unbutton his pants. So he lies on top of her and starts kissing her again. But immediately, and again suddenly, he falls down, as if sleepy, hiding his face between Lucía's shoulder and cheek.

Lucía respects that first and premature tiredness (certainly due to all that youth that the boy carries with him, like a gift to be squandered) and takes the opportunity to look at him and to look around him. Of the boy she only sees a bit of his matted hair and a burning ear; but the gaze that explores the room discovers everything that is in its sad evidence: misery, good sense, sadness, good sense.

On the ground lie the boy's clothes, recently thrown away: like the footprints of someone who had just passed by to disappear into the distance.

But not; he is there, present; He begins to move again, to caress her, to give her those imperious kisses, but too fresh, too innocent, as if he only wanted to satisfy an appetite that he himself barely knew; or as if she obeyed, with rapture, unconsciously, rules dictated by a habit prior to him and which he obeys like a simple, faithful and happy slave.

13

WHERE IT IS DESCRIBED HOW TO ALSO LUCY YOU END UP LOST THE BETRAY GOD

It seems incredible that our lives can be so empty of life and so full of the inanimate will to be so.

Yet who knows how, deep within the ground-bound fog - beyond the vapors that float over the roofs and poplar tops, beyond the low, torn clouds, beyond, at last, From the infinitely high cumulus clouds, perhaps a guarantee of a clear sky for the next day, a trace of the moon can be glimpsed, thin as a slice of melon or watermelon: a moon that declines, leaving unobserved and defeated.

A little of that atrociously melancholic lunar light enters the room where Lucía is lying with her eyes open, on the unmade cot.

In the unconsciousness of his dream full of rights, in his almost offensive innocence, the boy has occupied the entire bunk with his body; To do this, he has pushed Lucía to an extreme where she could not return to her dream, even if she wanted to. Waking up from it has been, for her, finding herself submerged in a state of intense stupor; and of pain, at least as irremediable as the dying light of that moon that announces the day.

The objects in the room stand out clearly, and one after another they are a source of pity and shame: the little table covered in oilcloth under the window; the two or three chairs; the shelves on the wall, with recreational books (no doubt bought second-hand); the desk with the large, severe study texts and notes; the closet that evidently only contains what is necessary to get dressed (clothes taken care of with such care that it makes your spirits shrink just thinking about them); the two-lira wallpaper on the walls; the reproductions of two or three famous paintings, framed with a strip of cardboard, and, on the bed, of course, a Virgin, made of white and blue ceramic, like those usually seen in kitchens.

Lucía gets up like a ghost, without having made (it is obvious) any decision. Maybe out of pure love, or maybe just to go to the window, to look at the source of that atrocious light that illuminates the room.

But he remains motionless, next to the bed, and looks... at the boy's clothes, thrown on the floor.

They are left just as he threw them the night before (but how many hours have passed?) when he furiously undressed, as boys who are so uncritical in the satisfaction of their crude desires do. And now they are like the remains of an animal that had left traces of it there, the signs of its passage through the earth, before leaving forever.

The liveliness of the clothes, so poor and prosaic, contrasts absurdly with the distance reached by its owner in his dream: the wrinkled pants, with the fly buttons loose, open on the floor in all their unconscious naivety; the underpants, perhaps not completely immaculate, with the sad marks of life; the shirt, which instead appears splendid, bathed in the now serene light of the moon; the shoes dramatically twisted, in all that peace; the beautiful thick wool sweater, of a not very bright color, although mysteriously youthful... The boy has not taken off his socks; He still wears them on the feet of his naked body.

Sleep on your side, like a fetus, with your arms extended and pressed (between your thighs, against your sex).

Lucía looks at him like a survivor: that blind innocence makes her sad; breathing that is too regular and a little dirty during sleep; The beauty of her face, which sweat and paleness have made sordid, as if mutilated, and perhaps a certain indistinct odor that emanates from her entire body (perhaps from those socks that she keeps on her feet) disgust him; It is a repugnance that increases due to the abandonment, the unconsciousness of the boy, so stupidly overcome by the need of the body. It is a disgust that is almost hatred for Lucía; a real desire to hit him, to offend him, with indignation and contempt, so that she understands once and for all that a man should not fall asleep like this, he should not give in, he should not die.

But Lucía can't win either.

**certain tenderness, the last, definitive
feeling you will experience when leaving
sneakily: he's already getting dressed,
She has already put on her skirt and is approaching
to him to caress once more that
naked body, whose muscles have been
distended and have become flesh
soft, unconscious. And her hand goes down
from the chest, wide and sweet as
a square, for the stomach divided
by its two symmetrical muscles, like
in the statues, through the belly, even
without a hint of fat, but already too much
virile, with a shadow of fine hair
that goes up to the navel and reaches
even sex, pure of everything that
let it not be the misery of the flesh.**

Then Lucía finishes dressing, very slowly, once again gripped by a nameless pain, and certainly without a remedy.

She takes her things and leaves the room, not too furtive or silent.

The boy's neighborhood is left behind; The street lights go out (a small lamp in front of the door of each of the sad houses). The day emerges, dirty, moonless, with identical white clouds everywhere.

Here is the street that goes to the center, along the canal with the stone parapet, followed by a long strip of grass.

The resigned people who go to work already appear; some on foot, towards the bus stop; others on a motorcycle, or on the sad, old Lambretta. The automobiles pass by, now annoyingly, endlessly, the fierce six hundred in the morning.

But there, on the other side of the street, against a little bridge that crosses the canal, two figures with that peculiar air that distinguishes them from everything, like the natural privilege of another race: youth.

Lucía barely catches a glimpse of them, when another car passes her. The boys raise their hands, confident and bold, asking without any courtesy for the favor of being given a ride.

Lucía advances another four hundred meters, then slows down and, desperately deciding to make a dangerous curve amidst the threats of the drivers of the utility vehicles that advance like a flood, turns back. The boys are not surprised: they make the questioning and detached gesture of a hitchhiker and when they see that Lucía stops the car, they run, say the few words barely necessary and get in.

The boy sitting next to her has blue eyes. He remains with his legs open, very upright, like some statues in old peasant churches, like the Homeric kings; but perhaps it is nothing more than the satisfaction of sitting in a car with such a displacement.

The one behind has a fox-like air, somewhat absent; perhaps because of the two he is the second or the inferior (due to age or perhaps for another reason); That is why he follows the events whose order is in the hands of the other, of the friend, and not of him, a simple observer who abandons himself, with a certain irony, to the sympathetic contemplation of him.

But the other, for the moment, seems immersed in a strange, immovable distraction: he contemplates, absorbed, the street. He mechanically unbuttons his jacket, looking straight ahead, eyes fixed. His thick innocent thighs sag, tight by the too light fabric of his summer pants (despite the time and the almost winter cold).

Lucía, equally absorbed, takes her right hand off the steering wheel and runs it through her disheveled hair (for a moment she covers her face, and her irritated and pale indifference breaks down, during that moment, into a grimace of pain or fear) ; Then she lets her hand fall, as if out of fatigue, out of morning boredom, no longer on the steering wheel but on the edge of her seat, abandoning it there to her inertia.

The boy, who has continued with his eyes fixed straight ahead - how, then, has he managed to notice the gesture? - gradually brings his hand closer (strong, a worker's or a criminal's) and after brushing Lucía's with his little finger , he takes it, carries it forcefully next to his thigh, covered by the almost transparent fabric, and finally, with a second push, to the sex.

The machine runs along the shiny asphalt of a street that disappears who knows where.

In any case, to the left and right are the irrigated fields, with their borders of poplars; Its green is sad and dry. The plain is flat, without a single undulation. The cathedrals of the poplars shine through one another, although they soon end up against the barriers of stagnant fog.

To the right is a dirt road with old cart tracks and, in the center, the spine of cold grass leading down to the meadows.

Almost mechanically, Lucía turns and takes that path, along a gigantic, trembling row of poplars. Miraculously, an old abandoned house appears, next to a moat full of water. She gets there by a bridge made of two rotten logs.

Lucía and the boy get out of the car, cross the little bridge, reach the gray and red walls of the house, among the grass wet with dew or the rain that fell during the night.

The boy leans her against the wall and without even kissing or hugging her, begins to remove the belt from his pants.

They have finished making love very quickly; A few minutes have been enough for the boy, just out of bed full of youthful sleep that has filled him with semen that any stimulus could release. Fastening his seatbelt, he leaves, directing just a timid glance (but one of undisturbed timidity) towards Lucía.

It disappears behind the angle of the wall. Lucía takes a while to get ready; her grimace of pain, or rather of terror, once again deforms her sweet, haggard face.

But here, behind the corner of the wall, the other boy appears, with his light and too fashionable jacket, the lapels raised, and, underneath, his old bluejeans. Only in that moment does Lucía realize the tacit pact and the fact that her own will participated in it. The new boy does not have blue eyes, he is not beautiful like the previous one, he is an ordinary boy, a little unpleasant. Lucía moves away from the wall and makes a gesture as if to leave, rebelling against the violence and silence of that unformulated pact; She is still sure that she is neither interested nor liked that boy. But he holds her back, with one hand resting against the wall, already so sure that he has defeated her that he does not lose his childish sweetness and the frank air of someone who, deep down, is asking for something please: the weight of his hand on her shoulder and the gesture of the other hand, which instinctively rests on his sex as a young mature father...

Lucía leaves the two boys in the small square of a village surrounded by factories and poplar trees. The two get off her, greet her and go animatedly, with agile steps, towards the tasks of her day, in that place that they know so well in her lives. Lucía starts the car and leaves for the countryside.

Soon he is in the middle of the meadows and the poplars. The morning is serene and the green shines melancholy and at the same time festive.

A river appears wedged between two dark ravines, an abyssal green, polished like bronze. Then a dense grove of poplars, with regular rows, infinitely long, that disappear where the sun triumphs, melancholy.

Then there are low valleys, which extend the horizon almost to the Po and, in the center, between dense squares of poplars, irrigated fields so faded that they seem almost white, mysterious like oriental rice fields.

All paths lead towards those visions. And they follow one after another, as in a labyrinth. Turning right is like turning left; Going towards the mountains that whiten in a kind of dream is like going towards the Po depression, which appears real, and even more so, realistic, but deeply strange, like a peasant world from remote and forgotten times.

Lucía, unable to find the path that takes her home, wanders through that elegiac labyrinth, so repulsively sad, despite the splendor of the green. Sometimes she turns and goes back, in the middle of a narrow asphalt road that, forward or backward, is absolutely identical; other times, after turning right at an intersection, she suddenly changes her mind and runs left. And

she is lost among the rows of poplars, blind in the ancient but energetic wild mystery of her.

Lucía's disorientation painted on her face, which has become like glass, hides an iron will. But which? Maybe it's nothing more than insensitivity, rejection. A "no" said to the truth, even the slightest, insufficient and desperate.

He takes a path like the others (perhaps he has already traversed it); then he reaches a crossroads and, this time decisively, turns to the right (here and there, the amphitheaters of poplars, irregular due to the bed of a river, perhaps the Lambro, dirty with factory waste). He reaches the height of a dirt road, with his usual green spine in the middle. There she stops, as if enchanted by an apparition that does not surprise her, does not cheer her, and simply absorbs her, plunging her into a rapid series of precise and inspired calculations.

The result of this meditation is that Lucía gets out of the car and heads, on foot, toward the vision that has stopped her in her race of insane turns.

It is a solitary chapel in the center of an expanse of meadows and poplars: a whitish, yellowish, small, elegant chapel, coming out of the still baroque head of a provincial artist who lived in the midst of neoclassicism, absurd, then, and perfect with its motley eighteenth-century ornaments, much more similar to noble coats of arms than to any sign of faith.

Totally alone and isolated, it is perched in the middle of the fields.

The door, broken, although made up of the old faithful of the 19th century, is unlocked, and creaks open under Lucía's timid push.

The interior is typical of the 18th century: sad, indeed, stolid and blessed. But the benches in a row (bottomed and disused, like the door) and a single tiny, crumbling confessional, precisely because they are in that total abandonment, do not cease to have the melancholy of the ancient, terrible religion, beyond whose confines they have passed. the miserable brothers and have been lost in the light of their suns.

In the small apse, above the empty and dusty altar, there is a painted crucifixion; It is undoubtedly the work of a poor romantic artist, crude and mannered imitator of Renaissance perspectives that only serve the people; The Christ nailed to the cross thus has the air of a spiritual young man, a little idiotic and ambiguous, although quite virile, with blue eyes full of what Divine Piety should be.

We will not enter into the consciousness of Lucía who, after making the sign of the cross, has remained motionless next to the door; There is no other expression in her than that due to the liquid blackness of her eyes, fixed and lost.

What attracts her is that Christ, as he abandons his thin body there, next to the door, like a piece of debris returned to its old life.

14

LEVITATION

There is no one on the bench against the peeling wall of the farmhouse. Emilia is not sitting in it.

Today, Emilia is higher up, but not looking at one of the windows, all closed, on the first floor, nor at one of the small windows, even smaller and without glass, in the barn. Emilia is on the ledge, on the roof.

Emilia is suspended in the sky. And she remains there, for no reason, with her arms open.

Perhaps she has spent many hours like this: suspended like a balloon or a hanged woman against the gray clouds through which a serene absurdity filters - it is almost nighttime -.

Below, in the courtyard, there is a crowd looking towards the sky without knowing what to say or do, perplexed and as if driven mad by the novelty. Only the child of the nettles, a relative of the saint suspended on the roof, perhaps because he is very small (and, therefore, feels more happy than amazed), occurs to do something: he runs towards the turret of the peasant house, in whose arc against the sky an old bell swings, hangs on the rope and begins to ring, to ring.

That strident and intemperate sound makes the extraordinary scene that takes place in the farmhouse acquire a more human meaning: people, in some way, rediscover the gestures, the actions necessary in those cases and recognize before their eyes the old and well-known presence. of God.

Some continue to watch while standing; others fall to their knees; some are silent, others pray; some are as if numb, others moved to tears. The astonishing presence of that small black figure, suspended over the edge of the roof, against a vertiginous sky, full of the melancholic clouds of twilight pierced with light, is a vision that fails to satisfy and exhaust the rapturous happiness with which it fills its witnesses.

Furthermore, it must be admitted that witnessing such a thing does not happen every day. No one could say at this moment what the shadows will bring with them that, like every afternoon, descend slowly, severely, from the sky.

15 RESEARCH ON THE HOLINESS

At this point, the reader must resign himself to a difficult and perhaps unpleasant detour from the course of the story to its background, which entails an interruption, certainly arid and prosaic, like any balance.

And how ugly, trivial and useless is the meaning of every parable without the parable!

**Those people who the miracle of the saint
has gathered in the farmhouse, so
rest, it is nothing but a huge and
motley peasant crowd like the
that are seen, on Sundays, in the
sanctuaries. The patio is so
confirmed that it is difficult to see Emilia,
sitting in the background, on her bench.
She has a black shawl on her head
hides her green hair.**

With the crowd has arrived a journalist with his sheaf of notes and his pencil (if not a chronicler, with his film camera).

It is evident that he has questions to ask all those people - and his guilty conscience can be seen on his face. Look around in search of the right "characters": there are poor housewives flushed with cold and fatigue, men worn out by a life spent in the irrigation fields and embankments of Lower Lombardy, among the mists and icy clouds and heavy, and poor soils. But there are also groups of bourgeois, intellectuals and, above all, ladies.

This inquiry is precisely the reason why the reader must suffer the violence - let's repeat it: perhaps justified - of an interpolation. This is the series of questions that the journalist addresses to the people gathered in the courtyard of the farmhouse; This interpolation, on the other hand, belongs

to a type of language, used in everyday cultural commerce - that of newspapers, television - and more than vulgar, it is simply vulgar. The survey questions are more or less the following:

"Do you believe in miracles? And who does them? God? Why? Why not to everyone, or through everyone?"

"Do you believe that God works miracles only to those who believe, or through those who truly believe?"

"If God revealed himself to you with a miracle, do you think your nature would be... altered? Or would it remain as it was before the miracle?"

"Do you think there would be a change in you? In that case, what would be more important: the miracle itself or the change, occurred because of the miracle, of his human nature?"

"According to you, what is the reason why God has chosen a poor woman from the town to manifest himself through a miracle?"

"Is it because the bourgeoisie cannot be truly religious?"

"Not insofar as they believe or think they believe, but insofar as they do not possess a real feeling of the sacred?"

"If we suppose the intervention of a miracle that forces a bourgeois into the presence of what is diverse and thus makes him doubt that false idea of himself that he has founded on the so-called normality, could the bourgeois ever acquire a genuine religious feeling?"

"No? Therefore, is every religious experience reduced, in the bourgeoisie, to a moral experience?"

"Is moralism the religion (when it exists) of the bourgeoisie?"

"So the bourgeois has replaced the soul with the conscience?"

"Does every ancient religious situation automatically transform, for him, into a simple case of conscience?"

"So is it metaphysical religion that has been lost, becoming a kind of behavioral religion?"

"Do you think this is the result of industrialization and petty-bourgeois civilization?"

"So nothing, not even a miracle or a divine experience of love, could resurrect in the bourgeois that ancient metaphysical feeling of peasant times? And instead, would it become for him a sterile struggle against his own conscience?"

"The soul had salvation as its goal, but the conscience..."

"The God... in whose name this daughter of peasants who has returned from the city, where she worked as a maid, performs miracles... is not an ancient God... precisely a peasant... biblical and a little crazy?"

"And what sense does it make that his miracles manifest themselves in this anachronistic corner of a peasant world?"

"So religion survives today, as an authentic fact, only in the peasant world, that is, in the Third World?"

"Isn't this what this crazy saint means, at the gates of Milan, before the first factories?"

"Is she not a terrible living indictment against the bourgeoisie that has reduced (at best) religion to a code of conduct?"

"So while this holy peasant woman can be saved, even in this historical hole, no bourgeois can be saved, either as an individual or as a collective? As an individual, because she no longer has a soul, but only conscience - perhaps noble, but in its nature itself, petty and limited -; as a collectivity, because its history is exhausted without leaving traces, ceasing to be the history of the first industries to be the history of the complete industrialization of the world."

"But the new type of religion that will then be born (and in the most developed nations the first signs are already seen) will have nothing to do with this shit (excuse the word) that is the bourgeois, capitalist or socialist world, in which "We live?"

16

THE TIME HAS COME TO DIE

It's very early. The sun has not risen yet.

The farm, with its large yards, is deserted. At most there is a bird chirping on the ice. Only Emilia is there, sitting as always on her bench.

But behold, a black and uncertain figure is advancing from the large gate that faces the road: it is an old woman, a toothless old woman, sweet, hesitant like a girl, who arrives stealthily, intimidated by her own steps.

She wears her best dress, the one she wears on holidays, the one she wears to go to the first mass; and yet she crosses the gate - under which it is the middle of the night - like a little thief, to reappear at the edge of the patio, more and more insecure, more and more disoriented.

**Perhaps he fears he has misunderstood,
to have made a mistake, to have committed
some mistake; therefore scrutinize, fill
of apprehension, the bottom of the patio
where the saint remains, upright and
inanimate, on the bench. Only at
After a long time Emilia demonstrates
who has noticed the old one.**

Then she gets up, for the first time in so long, and with the slow and rigid step with which, months and months before, she had returned home, she approaches the old woman who is waiting for her with a calm, complicit air.

Thus, without saying a single word, both women begin their journey.

They pass through the shadow of the gate, emerge beyond it, into the light of the vague expanses of the fields; but instead of turning right, along the paved road, they continue along the dirt road that goes into the countryside, towards another white door, the same as the one at the entrance gate, barely visible in the still pale air.

The sun is above the horizon, like a sad disk in the fog. Through the faded fields, the two women, silent and black, walk with agile steps, as if heading to a distant market.

Emilia cries desperately and without making a sound, but she lets those abundant tears run uninterrupted down her cheeks, without drying them.

**The
rustic houses, surrounded by neighborhoods
new; sad houses, illuminated by a
sun that reaches them discolored,
filtered by the fog that lingers in
the bottom of the countryside.**

Beyond the green, dewy shoulder of the country road an advertisement appears. – immense like the entire wall of a palace – where a man, clenching his fist, proclaims the imminent appearance of a new city in that area; Emilia lengthens her step, stern, without stopping crying, and soon reaches a large paved road that, shining sadly, points towards Milan.

With her old companion who follows her cheerfully, Emilia, always flowing a river of uncontrollable tears, is already walking through the suburbs of Milan.

There are no signs of life yet; everything is still and silent, as during the night, in the cold glow of the moon.

The two passengers walk quickly, not caring that their steps violate that silence of dawn, respected by everyone, men and things, as if by a tacit agreement. Only the sun is present, which tries with halfhearted effort to once again invade the city with its willful and disconsolate light.

Arriving at the place she has chosen - or that she has found at random and found suitable for her plans - Emilia stops. And the old woman, without asking anything, obedient as a child, stops behind her.

**In front of both opens an immense
embankment where they are building everything
a group of urban houses. In it
center of that embankment rises,
dizzily, an excavator; their
jaws, in the inertia of the hour
morning, are suspended against the
cielo.**

Not far from the excavator is a huge pit that the excavator must fill. Emilia observes that maelstrom in her gloomy mud color and resolves; With slow and well-calculated gestures she begins to descend towards the bottom, holding on to the protruding clods and the surviving bushes. The old woman, with the last of her peasant strength that she has worked without complaining all her life, follows her diligently. She does not discuss the saint's decisions; She considers them already taken in heaven and in her simple, old heart, she has accepted that this is how it should be. The pit is fifteen or twenty meters deep, and at the bottom the mud is still soft, sparkling with stagnant puddles.

Direct and confident like an automaton, but always crying, Emilia lies face up at the bottom of the pit, next to the cracked wall. Then, very slowly, having her faithful help help her, she completely covers herself with a layer of mud, so that she is invisible from above, confused with the soft and shiny earth and the puddles.

The tears, which flow abundantly and uninterruptedly, only dilute the mud around his eyes and accumulate in a tiny puddle.

When Emilia is already completely covered in mud (and is absolutely unrecognizable, to the point of blending perfectly with the bottom of the pit), as if obeying a tacit agreement, the old woman climbs very slowly up the slippery track that leads her to the edge of the pit, after which it disappears.

The sun rises once again and with a calm glow, as if all that chaotic and monstrous pain of dawn had been a dream. Preceded by the chatter of the men and by some distant knock - in the cranes without echo -, the excavator wakes up with a deafening, terrifying, maddened screech. But after that first howl, she falls silent. The silence and peace of the sun return. But only for a few moments. Because she immediately starts howling again, now to never end. He follows, painfully, the sudden, obtuse movements of the machine, which begins to move forward, backward, as if animated by a will of its own, although it is only capable of brief and senseless reasoning: brutally collecting an enormous amount of earth in a place, throw it, with a long screech of pain, into another.

Tears continue to flow from the pile of mud that covers Emilia, which are now a veritable stream, and the puddle they have formed is getting bigger.

The excavator has almost finished its task; The immense pit at the bottom of which Emilia had lain no longer exists. It is almost completely covered with a still fresh and soft earth that the excavator, finishing its task without stopping howling, throws it into the last remaining depressions, but all memory of the grave seems to have been lost.

From the place (now almost impossible to recognize) where Emilia has been buried, a trickle of water begins to flow, at first slowly - with the meticulous slowness with which insects move. They are Emilia's tears; Little by little they form another small puddle and from it another trickle of water begins to run across the land.

At this moment alarming screams - calls - and crying are heard; then, a confusion of many voices speaking agitatedly. What part of the works do they come from? Of the top floors, empty against the sky? From the open-air workshops, with planks and piles of iron in the mud?

But screams and voices seem close; In fact, they come from the other side of the palisade that borders the recently completed embankment, where the eyes of Emilia, buried, flow the river of her tears.

And here a group of workers comes out from behind the palisade, made of fresh wood on which a hand has crudely painted, with dripping pitch, a hammer and sickle.

They advance over the soft earth with a brisk step, without stopping talking animatedly. Among them, there is one who walks supported by his companions, who have one arm raised for him, with the greatest delicacy they can. His arm is bloody and the wounded man looks around, almost lifeless.

When the group, almost running, passes by the puddle of tears, one of the workers sees it, stops and takes the injured man to him; He dips his hands in it in the shape of a bowl and without thinking too much about it (he is a poor, old worker who undoubtedly comes from the countryside) washes the wound on his partner's wrist and hand with that water.

But as soon as the water begins to wash the blood from the flesh, the wound begins to heal; In a few moments, the gash closes and the blood stops flowing.

Before the workers, naturally, begin to cry out in astonishment - abandoning themselves to the naive and somewhat absurd manifestations that men cannot retain when they are faced with things of which they have no experience - there is a moment of profound silence. Their poor faces, undermined, hard, kind, are turned towards that puddle that shines, inconceivable, under the sun.

17

PAUL COROLLARY

The father, Pablo, leaves the villa, gets into his Mercedes and also takes the street where one day the guest disappeared.

The squares and alleys appear the same around him, beyond the windows of his car, in the leaden gray that from time to time alternates,

precisely in the most hostile and anonymous places, with some miserable sweetness of sun. But protected inside his powerful car, Pablo goes downtown, searching. It is the time when he usually works, and in truth, all of Milan works. But he searches, regardless of any rule, any schedule.

Like Lucía, Pablo has descended - and to what extent, and with how much unconsciousness - to closing deals with life; Therefore, his way of losing her can only be another pact, although unreasonable and abject. The looks of whoever he seeks are always the same, whatever he is looking for. And Pablo's eyes, as he looks around him - at that city that loves him equally with everyone and, furthermore, sure of himself, an energetic master - are so pleading, so hurt, so anxious that the pact stipulated with his life, to be able to lose it, there is also something extremist and pure about it.

You have arrived at the Central Station square; Since they are doing construction, it is difficult to park the car. Pablo revolves around her, anguished, childishly enraged (an old habit) against all other men: the wonderful inferiors who wisely, unconsciously, populate life. She finally finds a space, leaves his car there. He goes down, hiding his face as much as he can under the lapels of his coat, intimidated, obsessed, brutal behind the mask of excessive calm.

He enters the station and wanders around the ticket counters for a while (justified by the fact that he seems to buy the newspapers and consult the timetable). Meanwhile, he looks around, feigning distraction, and searches. Then, like so many other anonymous beings who have the same desire for dignity, he heads towards the escalator, goes up and arrives at the latiginous spaces of the enormous shed on the platform. In this limbo-like world, Pablo's uncertainty increases, almost becoming panic. Where to go? How to justify yourself there, in a place where everyone has such precise reasons for being? It is true that he pretends to be a citizen waiting for family or friends who will arrive on a train: but he has to search and, therefore, move, turn, commit: it is something more important than his dignity.

The miracle happens to him, as always, when he hits rock bottom: in fact, Pablo finds himself, already desperate, on the least crowded and least luminous platform of the station, along the left wall, with its sad series of small doors, until the enormous iron archway where the clarity of the sky appears (and the reader must be content with this indication that does not say everything: but this is a report written timidly and with fear).

The two blue eyes of a face that turns, looking over the broad shoulders, are those of a young man sitting miserably on a bench: perhaps an unemployed person who has long lonely hours before him, waiting for something to happen, or simply a worker waiting for his express, patient as a conscript. They are two eyes full of kindness and innocence.

Pablo stops behind him, trembling from head to toe. He starts by trying to read the newspaper and looks from time to time. To look he waits for the boy to turn around. But the boy seems immersed in the distraction of a sleepy animal: who knows what thoughts, what perspectives he has in his head, in what dream place his life unfolds.

Minutes pass and the boy does not turn around; Meanwhile, behind his back, Pablo makes every effort to continue pretending that he is, perhaps harshly, a severe and rigid person, although somewhat restless: to the point that he cannot keep his attention focused on the newspaper for more than a moment. .

The two blue eyes, good, innocent, and now a little disturbed, suddenly turn and land on Pablo's eyes, who responds almost with hostility to the look, incapable of any reaction.

Another few minutes pass, many. Then, as if in a dream, the boy gets up. Will everything end? Are things resolved with such bitterness, with such clarity?

He is tall, robust (and well, innocent, even in the lines of his body): yes, a conscript, with his poor bourgeois twenty-something clothes.

Where will he go now, without turning?

Little by little, Pablo realizes that he is going towards the end of the platform (there, where the whiteness of the sky is) and that it is not true that he does not turn back: before passing the sad door, not far from there, he looks back, fleetingly, once again, with his blue eyes charged with light and empty of all expression.

Pablo also moves, takes a few steps in the dark light of the station, moves unsteadily towards the door, but stops suddenly.

We will not enter Pablo's conscience, as we have not entered Lucia's conscience. We will limit ourselves to describing his actions dictated by him - it is evident - by a conscience already outside of life.

As if defeated and grateful, he quickly begins to take off his beautiful light coat, an inconceivable work of English origin; he lets it fall at his feet,

where it goes limp like something dead and suddenly estranged from its owner; the jacket, the tie, the sweater, the shirt follow the same fate.

Pablo remains like that, with his chest bare, under the station shed, and the few people who are walking there, at that dead hour, begin to stop and look at him. What's wrong with that man?

Now far from everything, Pablo, undaunted and absorbed, continues taking off what he is wearing, as if he no longer distinguishes reality from its symbols or, perhaps, as if he were determined to tear down once and for all the vain and illusory confines that They separate reality from its representation. This is what, in short, men separated forever from their lives by some faith do.

Thus, on top of the other clothes, pants, underpants, socks, and shoes fall. Next to the pile of clothes the two bare feet finally appear: they turn and at a slow pace they move away along the gray and shiny pavement of the platform, in the middle of the crowd of people on shoes who are pressing together, alarmed and speechless.

18

RESEARCH ON THE DONATION OF THE FABRIC

The midday bells of neighboring Lainate or Arese, even closer, ring out. And they mix with the mermaids.

The factory extends across the entire horizon, like an immense barge anchored between the irrigation fields and the transparent barriers of poplar trees.

The atmosphere is elegiac: those two or three kilometers of horizontal walls, vanished in the light fog, seem to surround, with Lombard tenderness and clarity, "calm, luxury and voluptuousness." Also the hundreds and hundreds of cars parked in a row at their positions seem like colored samples of that order, of that peace.

Then, suddenly, a true hell: the six thousand five hundred factory workers begin to leave, all together, vomited through the folding gates, and the entire parking area seems to be upset by some kind of cyclone.

**But the space in front of the factory is
so immense that the multitude of**

**workers disperse in it. And soon
would disappear if they were not formed, here and
there, unforeseen and out of all rules,
groups, crowds, as in the days
when a strike is being prepared or before
the elections. There are also platoons of
police officers, in an alert and tense attitude,
while some bourgeois, evidently
journalists or curious people, mix with the
workers.**

Now the reader must resign himself for the second time - with patience, as far as possible - to a new interpellation in the story: he must press the pedal of poor everyday logic, abandoning, with understandable annoyance, that of sweet imagination.

Indeed, a journalist (or a chronicler, with his film camera), perhaps the same one we saw in Emilia's house, faces the crowd of workers with a professional air that does not disguise shyness or bad conscience. He begins to ask them questions that he has carefully prepared, in his low-class language, typical of the culture for average citizens.

Here are the questions, intended to inform the sordid prose of today, without which, on the other hand, neither the author nor the reader (united by a tacit and guilty agreement), could not keep their conscience at peace:

"Do you work here? How many years have you done? And you? Well, what do you think of the measure taken by your employer?"

"The boss has given you the factory: now the owners are you, the workers. Aren't you humiliated to have received it as a donation?"

"Wouldn't you have preferred to obtain your right to own the factory through an action of yourselves?"

"In all this, the protagonist has been the boss. In this way, hasn't he left them in the shadows? Hasn't he, in a way, separated them from the revolutionary future of the working class?"

"Is the action taken by your employer an isolated action or does it represent a general trend of all employers in the modern world?"

"Would the mutation of man into petit-bourgeois be total?"

"If we consider this donation as a symbol or an extreme case of the new course that power has taken, does it not appear to us as a first, prehistoric contribution to the change of all men into petit-bourgeois?"

"As a historical act, would the donation of the factory be, at least from the point of view of the workers and intellectuals, a historical crime and, as a private act, an old religious solution?"

"But isn't this religious solution the survival of a world that no longer has anything to do with ours? Is it not born of guilt, rather than love? So a bourgeois could never recover his life, even if he lost it... "

"The hypothesis - not very original - would therefore be this: a bourgeois can no longer free himself from his fate in any way, neither publicly nor privately. And a bourgeois is always wrong, whatever his actions."

"Can we consider the idea of possession and conservation as the origin of all this?"

"But the idea of possession and conservation on which the condemnation of the bourgeoisie is based, are they not a characteristic of the old world of the bosses? While the new world does not seek so much to possess and preserve, as to produce and consume? ?

"But if now this bourgeoisie revolutionarily transforms its own nature and tends to make itself similar to all of humanity, up to the total identification of the bourgeois with man, doesn't that old rage, that old indignation lose meaning?"

"And if the bourgeoisie - identifying all of humanity with itself - no longer has anyone, outside of itself, to whom to delegate the mission of its own condemnation (which it has never known or wanted to pronounce), has its ambiguity not become , finally, into something tragic?"

"Tragic because, by no longer having a class struggle to overcome (with any means, including criminal ones, such as the idea of a Nation, Army, confessional Church, etc.), it has been left alone in the face of the need to know what is she herself?"

"If the bourgeoisie is victorious, at least potentially, and the future belongs to it: is it not now up to it itself (and no longer to the forces of opposition and revolution) to respond to the demands that history - that is , your story- do you?"

**“She can't answer these
questions?”**

19

AH, MY BARE FEET...

Ah, my naked feet that walk
through the desert sand!
My bare feet that carry me
where there is only a single presence
and where nothing protects me from any look!
my bare feet
who have chosen a path
that I follow as in a vision
of the fathers who built,
in the 20th, my town of Milan and of the young
architects
that they completed it in '60!
As already for the people of Israel and the apostle
Pablo,
the desert appears before me
as the only part of reality that is
indispensable.
Or better yet, like reality
stripped of everything except its essence,
as it is represented by those who live and, sometimes,
he thinks it, even without being a philosopher.
In fact, there is nothing here
that is not necessary:
the earth, the sky and the body of a man.
By demented, abysmal the ethereal
Let it be the dark horizon, its line is one:
and any point of its is equal to another point.
The dark desert that seems to shine,
such is its sugary sweetness,
and the vault of the sky, incurably blue,
They always change, but they are always the same.

Good. What to say about myself?
Of me, that I am where I was and was where
I'm
automaton of a real person
sent to walk through the desert instead
ella?
I am filled with a question that I cannot answer.
Sad result, if I have chosen this desert
as a true and ideal place in my life!
The one who searched the streets of Milan
Is it the same one that is now looking for the streets of the
desert?
It's true: the symbol of reality
It has something that reality lacks:
represents all meaning,
and at the same time adds -precisely
due to its representative nature - a
new meaning.
But this new meaning is indecipherable
for me
—unlike the people of Israel or the apostle
Pablo-.
In the deep silence of sacred evocation,
I wonder then if to go to the desert
it is not necessary to have had a life
already predestined to the desert, and if by living
In the days of history - so much less beautiful,
pure and essential than its representation-
it is not necessary to have known how to respond
to your endless and useless questions
to be able to respond now
to this desert, unique and absolute.
Wretched, prosaic conclusion
—secular by imposition of a culture of people
oppressed-
of a change initiated to go towards God!

But what will prevail? Does the aridity
worldly
of reason or religion, despicable fertility
who lives
relegated in history?
My face, then, is sweet and resigned
while I walk slowly,
panting and bathed in sweat,
when I run
full of sacred terror,
When I look around me at this endless unity,
childishly worried,
when I look under my bare feet
the sand on which I slide or crawl:
precisely as in life, as in Milan.
But why do I stop suddenly?
Why do I stare before me, as if I saw
something?
There's nothing new beyond the horizon
dark,
that is delineated infinitely different or the same
against the blue sky of this place
imagined by my poor culture.
Why, without my will ordering it,
my face twitches,
The veins in my neck swell,
Do my eyes fill with a burning light?
And why the cry - which for some time
moments
It comes out of my throat angrily-
adds nothing to the ambiguity that until now
Has he mastered my desert wandering?
It's impossible to say what kind of scream
It is mine: although it is undoubtedly terrible
—to the point that it disfigures my features
making them similar to the jaws of a beast,

It is also, in a way, happy,
and it turns me almost into a child.
It is a cry that summons someone's attention
or your help; but perhaps it also curses him.
It is a howl that wants to proclaim,
In this uninhabited place, that I exist,
or not only that I exist,
but also that I am. It's a scream
in which, sunk in anguish,
a vile accent of hope is felt;
or perhaps a cry of certainty, totally absurd,
within which pure despair resonates.
Anyway, this is true: whatever
the meaning of my cry,
It is destined to endure beyond all possible ends.

ATTACHMENTS

Regarding chapter 6, part I ("End of the enunciation"):
The young man with bright eyes and brown skin.
The beautiful twenty year old body that should go naked.
And what was there, the copper-rimmed forehead, under the moon.
Adored, in Persia, an unknown Genius,
Impetuous with virginal sweetness
And black, proud of its first stubbornness,
Like the young seas...

(From the Poésies of Arthur Rimbaud.)

Regarding chapter 14, part I ("Reeducation for disorder and disobedience"):

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you {knowledge that also implies physical love, as is known}; Before you were born I sanctified you, I made you a prophet to the nations.

And I said: "Ah, Lord Jehovah! Behold, I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO SPEAK, BECAUSE I AM YOUNG" [capital letters are mine].

And the Lord said to me: "Do not say 'I am young,' for you will go to everything I send you, and you will say everything I command you."

"Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD,

And the LORD stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."

(From Jeremiah, 1, 5-9.)

Regarding chapters 16 and 17, part I ("The Father's Turn Comes" and "Everything Miraculous Like the Morning Light Never Seen"):

Thus Jacob was left alone; And a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when the man saw that he could not overcome him, he touched the socket of his thigh, and Jacob's thigh came out of joint while he was wrestling with him. And he said, "Leave me, for the dawn breaks."

(From Genesis, 32, 24-26.)

Regarding chapter 22, part I ("Through the eyes of the father in love"): the passage from Rimbaud that the guest reads may be this:

...She [in our case he] belonged to life itself: and the turn of goodness would have taken longer to reproduce than a star. The Adorable [The Adorable} who, without ever expecting it, had arrived, has not returned and will never return.

Regarding the entire exhibition (as I said in the text, "report"):

You seduced me, O Lord, and I was seduced; You were stronger than me, and you defeated me [also in the physical sense]; Every day I have been mocked, everyone makes fun of me...

For I heard the murmuring of many: "Fear on all sides: Denounce, let us denounce him." All my friends were watching to see if I would give up. "Perhaps he will be deceived, they said, and we will prevail against him, and take our revenge on him."

(From Jeremiah, 20, 7 and 10.)

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